San Diego GOP: An Endangered Species?

california JOURNAL

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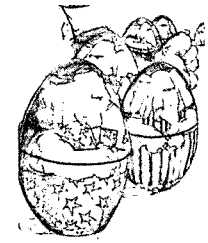

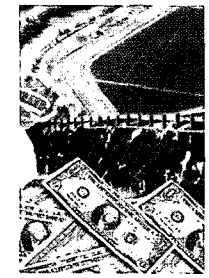

Dana Wilkie...

...is a name readers see more and more in the pages of this magazine. A reporter in the Washington, D.C., bureau of Copley News Service, Dana has become our most prolific freelance contributor, churning out a steady stream of excellent stories, as well as a bimonthly column she shares with *San Francisco Chronicle* Washington Bureau Chief Marc Sandalow. Her most recent project for us is a series of profiles on Californians in the Bush administration, this month focusing on Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman — a story she polished while also covering the September visit of Mexican President Vincente Fox for her employer. Her portfolio is all the more remarkable given that she is a new mother, raising a daughter, Ellie, born earlier this year. Dana became a *Journal* contributing editor in mid-1998 when she began writing the "D.C. Perspective" column, and we consider ourselves — and you — fortunate to be among the beneficiaries of her professionalism and hard work.

A.G. Block

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umbrage

Fifteen minutes. Through the years, *California Journal* has been proud of its often-singular coverage of substantive issues. In two instances this year, we tackled the crisis in rural health care and the state's crippling shortage of qualified teachers. In recent years, we've produced award-winning stories on lack of treatment for the mentally ill, the nuances of gun control and needed reforms in the juvenile justice system, among others. Five years ago, we were among the first to detail potential pitfalls associated with electricity deregulation (*CJ*, November 1996). So, where have we made a national mark? Gary Condit's sex life, of course – the only reportage of apparent interest to big media outfits such as *Time* and *talk* magazines, Fox News Tonight, CNN and ABC News. That interest stems from a 1988 story on the Condit-led "Gang of Five" that tried to topple then-Speaker Willie Brown Jr. (*CJ*, April 1988). An accompanying profile about then-Assemblyman Condit noted his party-boy personna, a passing reference that haunts us today. *Time* and *talk* quoted the article, while television producers call regularly to set up interviews (all but one have been denied). Hopefully, our 15 minutes in this particular sun are about used up. Substance, anyone?

Bully for you. The state — led by its poster boy, Governor Gray Davis — is fighting an ACLU-inspired lawsuit (*Williams v. California*) that seeks minimum standards for all the state's school facilities. Of special concern are schools in poor neighborhoods, many of which are dirty, vermin-infested and in desperate need of repair. Aside from whatever rationale led the governor to fight an attempt to rid schools of rats, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that Davis' lawyers have put plaintiff's witnesses through grueling depositions, highlighted by bullying tactics meant to discourage and intimidate. Some witnesses have been reduced to tears, the newspaper reported on September 6, while one even dropped out of the case. All's fair in love and lawsuits, you say? Well, yes, under normal circumstances. Unfortunately, the witnesses in this case are children, aged eight to 17, who attend these run-down schools. So, hats off to the lions at O'Melveny & Myers in Los Angeles, which has raked in $2.5 million to represent the state. According to the *Chronicle*, the mega-firm also added a scalp to its wall — the eight-year-old who bailed after one session with an O&M hotshot.

Surprise, surprise, surprise. Is anyone really shocked that a congressional reapportionment plan, drawn in part by Michael Berman, would shift 250,000 Latino voters out of what is now the 26th District and into a neighboring enclave? After all, the 26th District incumbent is Democrat Howard Berman — Michael's brother. The recipient of this donation? Democrat Brad Sherman from the 24th District, who inherited a sizeable chunk of Latinos but little sympathy from those orchestrating reapportionment. One major domo — state Senator Don Perata (D-Oakland) — even suggested that Sherman retire if he didn't want a primary showdown from a Latino challenger.

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Neighborhood clout

by Sherry Bebitch Jeffe

October marks the official launch of Los Angeles' brave, new experiment in local governance. Official certification begins this month for what could ultimately total over 100 "neighborhood councils." Part of the sweeping charter reform approved by Los Angeles voters in 1999, these bodies — labeled by some critics as "little soviets" — are meant not only to give local communities a larger role in City Hall decision-making but to help derail several secession drives.

Will the strategy work?

Secessionist ardor in the Harbor area may have cooled with the election last June of James Hahn as mayor and of his sister, Janice, as the new Council member from that district. The Hollywood breakaway attempt is progressing fitfully; public funding for required studies has been stymied by the state's budget crunch.

But a referendum on San Fernando Valley cityhood is moving toward the November 2002 ballot. Valley secession would require majorities in both the seceding community and the entire city. Los Angeles' newly elected leaders, and breakaway proponents, are eyeing the potential impact of neighborhood councils on public support. One secession leader bluntly insisted, "If they don't work, we're going to secede."

The city's leadership is hustling hard to prevent that. Council President Alex Padilla is the first member from the San Fernando Valley to hold that office in nearly three decades (see interview, page 34). One of Padilla's first moves was to establish a committee to deal with neighborhood councils. Padilla, however, riled breakaway advocates with his appointments to the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), a state-mandated agency with countywide jurisdiction charged with managing the secession process and determining whether the Valley can sustain itself financially.

Padilla replaced secession-friendly Councilman Hal Bernson, who represents the Northwest Valley, with Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski, a secession opponent whose district includes parts of both the Westside and the Valley. Secession leaders charged Padilla with attempting to sabotage breakaway attempts. Bernson, who voted for Padilla's opponent in the contest for Council president, questioned the motives behind his ouster in favor of Miscikowski, a Padilla ally in the leadership fight; he labeled the move "a slap in the face of the San Fernando Valley." Both Padilla and Miscikowski said they would not block a secession election.

If neighborhood councils fail to head off secession, it won't be for lack of mayoral involvement. Hahn made "neighborhood empowerment" a cornerstone of his campaign, in which he received strong support from Valley moderates and conservatives. Hahn quickly established the Mayor's Office of the Neighborhood Advocate to deal with secession concerns and work with neighborhood councils, and he shook up the city's Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), established to support and regulate these new local bodies. Hahn also appointed Felipe Fuentes, a Northeast Valley resident and former Padilla aide, as deputy mayor for Valley issues. Fuentes will also be Hahn's point person on a key concern of the San Fernando Valley: redistricting.

Redistricting highlights a possibly irreconcilable tension between secessionists' demands and "neighborhood empowerment."

There is little either Hahn or a network of neighborhood councils can do to meet the demands of Valley leaders for a fifth all-Valley City Council seat. Currently, four of the 15 Council districts are "Valley-only" seats; three more extend from pockets of the Valley into other areas of the city. Some critics assert these "split districts" dilute the Valley's clout.

Under the new charter, a 21-member Redistricting Commission will "advise" the City Council on line drawing. It includes three mayoral appointees, two members appointed by Padilla, and one each by the other 14 Council members, the city attorney and city controller. Nevertheless, the final say on redistricting lies with Council members who represent diverse interests and groups throughout the city.

Redistricting highlights a possibly irreconcilable tension between secessionists' demands and "neighborhood empowerment." If strong neighborhood councils fragment local control and narrow the parameters of decision-making to smaller and smaller entities, problems beyond the scope of a neighborhood may become harder to resolve. And these are the very problems that fuel secession movements.

Experience tells us they are also problems that dozens of "little soviets" can't resolve.

Sherry Bebitch Jeffe is a senior scholar at USC's School of Policy, Planning & Development. Comments may be sent to **edit@statenet.com**

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New and Different:

Be all that you can be

When the United States Army lures a new batch of recruits, it touts travel, college credit and adventure. It doesn't mention the organized hazing known as Basic Training. Then again, once you've enlisted in the Army, you're in — even when reality doesn't measure up to the recruitment poster.

Photo:Lara Porzak, ©Teachers Documentary Project 2001

Not so if you become a teacher. You can go AWOL anytime if the classroom isn't what you thought it would be, and a huge number of novice teachers take that one-way exit. Concerned about a chronic teacher shortage and the circumstances that cause young teachers to flee, a Southern California film maker has created a pair of videos that give likely recruits a reality check *before* they enter a teaching program, much less a classroom.

"The First Year" and "TEACH" are the brainchildren of Davis Guggenheim, whose list of film credits include the movie "Gossip" and episodes for TV shows such as "NYPD Blue." In "The First Year," Guggenheim follows the fortunes of five Los Angeles-area teachers trying to survive as classroom rookies, emphasizing the pitfalls and frustrations more than the rewards. It isn't a typical recruitment effort but, as Guggenheim told the *Los Angeles Times,* "Teachers who go in with a fantasy of what it's about disappear anyway."

The $1 million project was jointly funded by the J. Paul Getty Trust and California State University, home to the state's largest teacher-training program.

Media Watch:

Number crunching

Since the days when Joe Cro-Magnon gave cousin Murray hunks of meat for Murray's stick-figure drawings, the largess of others has nurtured artistic achievement. Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, George Frederick Handel — among others — were supported by wealthy patrons. In California, government is a patron of sorts. But as the *San Francisco Chronicle* recently reported, the city of San Francisco seems to lavish its art bucks on those who need it least. In a study by reporter Todd Wallack, the *Chronicle* noted that the San Francisco Symphony — with net assets in excess of $220 million — received $2 million in government grants last year. It also was among the city's top private fund raisers and, according to the paper, employed not only a development staff of 22 but an outside fund-raising consultant at a cool $500,000 a year. Had it not received a dime from the city, the symphony still would have struggled along, thanks to a $41 million surplus — of cash, not assets. By contrast, the *Chronicle* reported, a group called SoundSafe, which helps rock musicians find places to practice in space-starved San Francisco, managed $25,000 from the city budget — a tad short of the $4 million needed to buy a building. The Cartoon Art Museum, which needs $500,000 to reopen, netted $38,000. In fact, Wallack reported, the city's top 50 non-profit arts groups (in terms of revenue) pulled in 77 percent of San Francisco's $11.2 million arts' kitty; 899 other non-profits shared 23 percent.

Quotables.....

"It's not surprising that, like bugs under a rock, the lobbyists scurry away to avoid the light of day."

— Harvey Rosenfield with the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights, whose volunteers angered Capitol lobbyists by videotaping their conversations with legislators during hearings on the Southern California Edison bailout.

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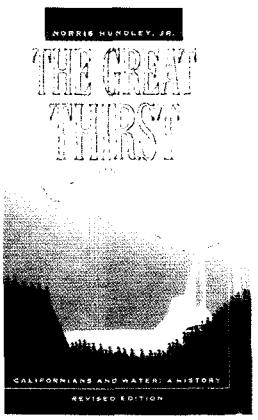
Excerpts:

From the bookshelf

The Great Thirst
Californians and Water: A History
Revised Edition
By Norris Hundley Jr.
University of California Press

Energy is the 2001 political *headache du jour*. But some policy wonks think California is in for an even stronger migraine in the not-too-distant future — this time over yet another arcane subject: water. Want to understand water? Go to the source: Norris Hundley Jr.'s "The Great Thirst," first released in 1992 and now revised and updated. This 800-page shelf-sagger, profusely illustrated with maps and charts, begins with an overview of water use among aboriginal tribes and meanders down through history to the morass of conflicting laws and management that mark California water policy today.



More than any other commodity, water has shaped modern California. Imported water transformed the Southern California desert into an urban megapolis and made the Central and Imperial valleys into agricultural powerhouses. Over the decades, water has been at the center of more than a few conflicts, legal and otherwise, in places such as Mono Lake, the Owens Valley, Hetch Hetchy Valley, the All-American Canal and the Sacramento River Delta. Its history is dotted with legendary figures, such as William Mulholland, John Muir, James Phelan and Pat Brown. More recently, the likes of Keith Brackpool seek to influence the flow of water. And, as Hundley points out in one of the book's major themes, government at all levels has been a key player in the drama. Government's role is especially critical today, for water has become a fragile asset, threatened both above and below ground (see *CJ*, July 2001).

Hundley, professor emeritus of history at UCLA, helped with the state's other great water reference — the "California Water Atlas" (1979). He has augmented his original "The Great Thirst" with new material on, among other subjects, legal conflicts over Mono Lake and the Owens Valley, water-marketing schemes and the advent of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. Available from UC Press, the book sells for $65 in hardback, $24.95 in paperback.

Compiled by CJ Editors

By the numbers

Growing gap in home ownership

1 million: Decline in the number of California's white residents since 1990.

25,000: Increase in the number of white homeowners in the last decade.

65%: Percentage of whites who own homes statewide, a 3% increase over the last ten years despite population decline.

1.4 million: Increase in the number of minority households during the 1990s.

747,000: Number of new minority homeowners since 1990.

46%: Percentage of minorities who own homes in California, up just 3% since 1990, despite a proportionately bigger population surge as compared to whites.

$45,000: Median household income in California, which is less than two-thirds that needed to buy a median-priced home.

Source: San Francisco Chronicle, U.S. Census Bureau

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Navigating a choppy child care system

Ever since California launched its heralded welfare-to-work program four years ago, it has spent billions providing child care for welfare parents, helping them get permanently off aid and into paying jobs. But as many low-income parents and child care advocates are finding, it's not enough. It boils down to simple math: too many kids for too few child care spaces.

By Jan Ferris Heenan

Deborah Greb-Ferris knows about the hardships of securing child care for her four children. Between high costs and her children's acute medical needs, finding affordable and willing caregivers have long proved difficult, so much so that the Sacramento woman long delayed plans to trade welfare for a hard-earned paycheck.

Until now. The 38-year-old single mother has been studying for nearly two years to become a preschool teacher, with her own child-care needs provided by a local non-profit agency. "If you want to make it, you'll make it. You'll overcome the obstacles that are thrown in your face," says Greb-Ferris (*no relation to the author*).

There is no question that there are more resources out there today than a decade ago to help Greb-Ferris and thousands of others — mainly women — in similar straits. But the price tag for those seeking and those providing child care, is nothing short of staggering. Since instituting welfare reform four years ago, California has more than tripled its child-care budget for low-income families to $3 billion this year. Sticker shock is setting in around the Golden State, as even some of the welfare reform's staunchest advocates are dismayed at the accompanying expense and administrative tangles of solving the state's need for child-care centers.

"The very positive news is that the Legislature and the (Governor Gray Davis) administration recognize that low-paying jobs and child care are a marriage that has to be made," said Patty Siegel, executive director of the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network. Nevertheless, Siegel believes that state did not have adequate time to make room for the influx of 230,000 children in need of child care. "Sometimes I lie awake at night and think, 'Oh my gosh, we got what we advocated

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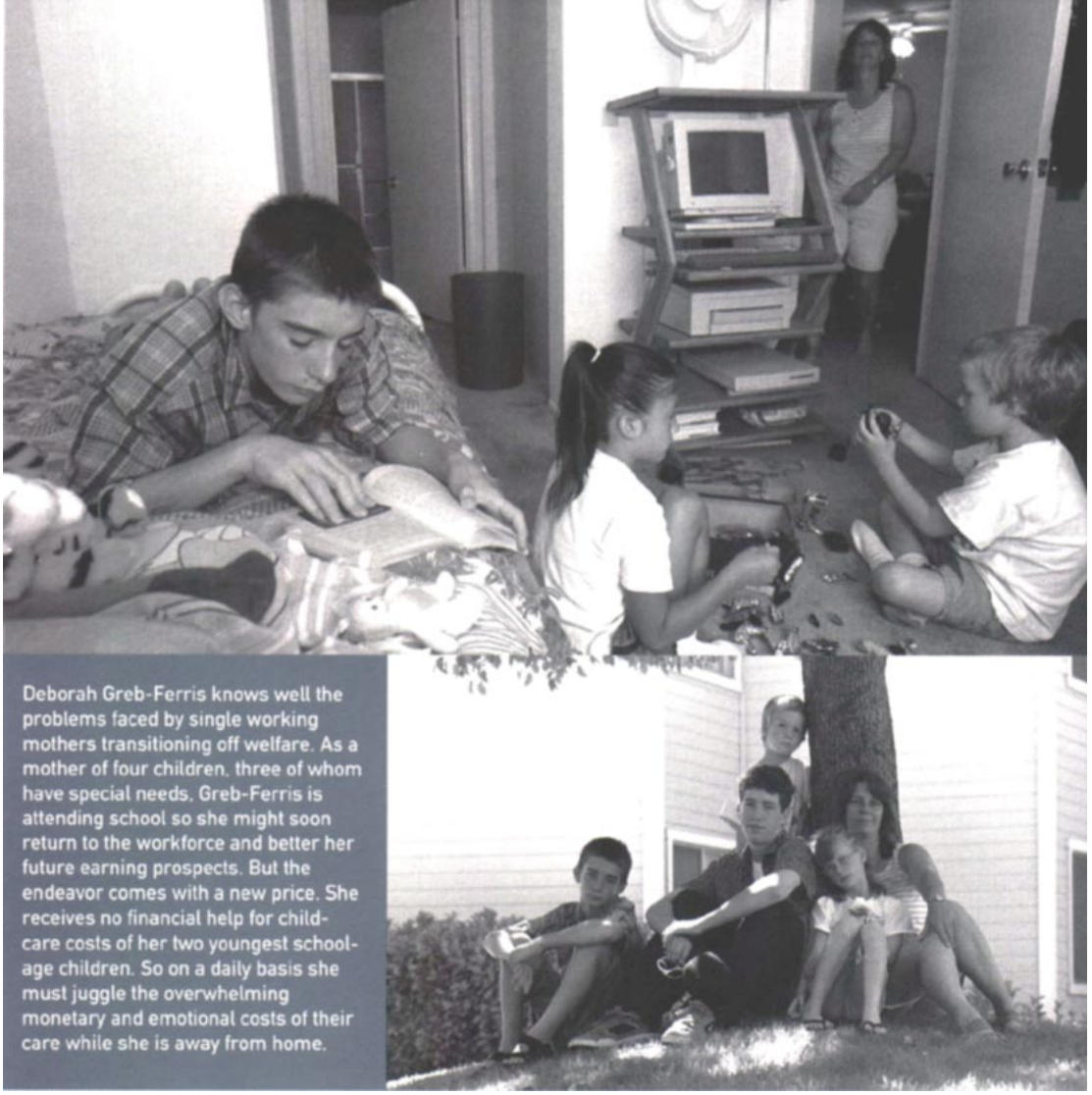
for.' I think that perhaps some of us were naive."

Following federal mandates requiring states to overhaul their welfare programs, California in 1997 began revamping its system. Under the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Act, or CalWORKs, the state put time limits on cash assistance and provided training and other resources to move aid recipients off welfare rolls and into the job market.

Advocates such as Siegel, along with many lawmakers, say the mammoth welfare reforms have not created but, rather, have amplified long-existing shortcomings in the child-care arena. These deficiencies include unequal and inadequate access to subsidies or quality care, a costly and unwieldy voucher payment structure and paltry wages for day-care workers.



Deborah Greb-Ferris knows well the problems faced by single working mothers transitioning off welfare. As a mother of four children, three of whom have special needs, Greb-Ferris is attending school so she might soon return to the workforce and better her future earning prospects. But the endeavor comes with a new price. She receives no financial help for child-care costs of her two youngest school-age children. So on a daily basis she must juggle the overwhelming monetary and emotional costs of their care while she is away from home.

(Below) Deborah Greb-Ferris and her four children, from right to left — Nicole, 8; Tyler, 6; Joseph, 18 and Zachariah, 1‹ (Above) Joseph studying while Nicole and Tyler play together. Quiet space is at a premium with the family sharing two bedrooms.

A "fragile and chaotic" system

Despite the drawbacks, many believe there is a silver lining: the dire circumstances have focused attention on child-care shortages, an issue that has been overlooked for too long.

"I do think the welfare-to-work movement and this push to get single mothers into the workforce have really illuminated how fragile and chaotic the child-care system is in California," said Bruce Fuller, professor of public policy and education at the University of California, Berkeley, and co-author of several studies on child care and welfare reform. "It has also really provided a lot of political juice for the issue that just wasn't there before."

California has been in the child-care business since the 1940s, opening nursery schools during World War II when women began stepping into industrial jobs left vacant by soldiers bound for war. The state is one of the few in the nation that has continued to maintain its own network of child-care centers as well as other child-care subsidies for poor families.

But at what price? That's precisely the question posed by Governor Gray Davis this summer when he vetoed $24 million in child-care aid originally targeted for families in the third and final stage of California's welfare reform initiative. In his 2001-2002 budget message, Davis instructed lawmakers to "use existing resources allocated for these programs more effectively and to revise inequitable access policies that currently disadvantage low-income populations who have not received public assistance through CalWORKs."

While $24 million is pocket change when compared to California's overall spending on child care (which includes both state and federal monies), Davis' action cut to the heart of a prickly issue: Where is the equity in a system that guarantees state-funded child care to families moving off welfare but leaves thousands of other low-income working families in the lurch? And what is the state's responsibility toward needy families in general?

For years, families earning up to 75 percent of the state's median income, about $35,000, have been eligible for state assistance in securing child care — though most who are lucky enough to make their way off the long waiting list earn far less, Fuller said.

Pushed aside

Priority goes first to children considered at-risk of abuse and neglect, then to the lowest-income families. But with the inception of welfare reform and its guarantee of

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(Above) One the important jobs of a mother, giving hugs when needed. (Above right) Many of the hours at home are spent folding, ironing or washing clothes.

assistance to CalWORKs' participants, many say it has become obvious that the working poor have been pushed aside — leaving as many as 280,000 eligible children uncovered.

Assemblywoman Dion Aroner (D-Oakland), one of the chief architects of welfare reform as chair of the Assembly Health and Human Services Committee, believes the qualification process that made sense when first established is no longer appropriate. "The problem is the way it plays out in the community. People who do the right thing, play by the rules and put their children on waiting lists can get bounced as they get close to the top," Aroner said. "I've always said this in any kind of debate: Fairness is very important, and that doesn't appear to be fair."

At Crystal Stairs, the state's largest non-profit child-care service and advocacy agency, the waiting list for subsidies is 22,440-children long. "The big thing about welfare reform is that policy makers finally got that child care is needed for people on welfare in order to work," said Alice Walker Duff, president and co-founder of the Los Angeles-based organization. "But they missed the part about low-income people desperately needing it to work, and how important child care is to the healthy development of children."

A Mom in need

Greb-Ferris of Sacramento can attest to that. A mother by the age of 20, she has spent much of her adult life on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), precursor to the federally mandated welfare reform. She was taken off welfare when she began receiving survivor benefits from two of her children's deceased fathers, she says. Greb-Ferris currently attends a local community college where she is training to teach preschool. Affordable and reliable day care has long eluded her, she says, in part because three of her four children have special needs, including severe asthma and Attention Deficit Disorder.

Though nearer to the working world than ever, Greb-Ferris is struggling to secure just a few hours of after-school care a week for her 6- and 8-year-old youngsters. "The minute you make more than that cash aid allows you, you're screwed. What do you do? You have to beg and plead to family members, 'Please help me,'" Greb-Ferris complained. "It's like nobody out there wants to help."

That CalWORKs and working poor families have wound up with uneven access to child-care resources in recent years is invariably classed as an equity issue.

To Sherry Paul, child-care administrator for San Diego County, the problem is one of fairness but also much more.

"It's more of an investment-in-your-community issue. We decided to fully fund welfare reform because we wanted people to be self-sufficient. We also want people who are self-sufficient to stay self-sufficient," Paul said. "If we want to have children ready for kindergarten, then we need to be looking at investing in some of these quality alternatives for everyone in the community."

For many families around the state, however, the alternatives don't come cheap. Child care costs $6,500 a year on average for a toddler enrolled in a full-time, licensed center, according to the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network. For a family getting by on minimum wage, or $11,960 a year, that sum represents 55 percent of its annual earnings, according to "The Califor-

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Alice Walker Duff, Crystal Stairs co-founder

"The big thing about welfare reform is that policy makers finally got that child care is needed for people on welfare in order to work."

— Alice Walker Duff

nia Child Care Portfolio," the Referral Network's report released in 1999.

Priced out of daycare

Jean Ross, executive director of the California Budget Project, thinks the issue of child-care affordability was largely ignored by policy makers and lawmakers when welfare reforms were instituted. That oversight seems particularly glaring now that many families leaving welfare are earning just $8 or $9 an hour, she says. "Nobody said, 'Is that realistic that a woman with a limited education can get a job, pay the rent, put food on the table and take her kids to day care?'" said Ross, whose policy group in May issued a report, "Lasting Returns: Strengthening California's Child Care and Development System." If lawmakers and policy advocates considered the affordability issue at all, she said, they quickly moved on because it would have given an answer they didn't want to know.

By law, CalWORKs families are given vouchers to spend on child care of their own choosing. In the first two years of the initiative, the vast majority opted for unlicensed supervision — by neighbors or relatives, for example — instead of slots in regulated centers or licensed homes.

Before welfare reform, just 20 percent of Crystal Stairs' clients sought out such unlicensed providers, many of whom must undergo criminal checks but are otherwise exempt from state regulations such as professional training and safety standards. By June of this year, that percentage had nearly quadrupled, according to Walker Duff.

The reasons vary for choosing such informal care. Some parents and advocates point to a shortage of center-based slots for infants and toddlers. Some are spurred by issues of trust or convenience.

Regardless of the reason, legislators, lobbyists and others are concerned about the heavy financial reliance on unregulated care. They fear it has eroded the stability of licensed day-care centers and home-based operators — particularly in low-income communities.

"If I had my druthers, all child care would be licensed," said Aroner. "People who are trained to take care of children provide better care."

She points to recent research by Policy Analysis for California Education as proof. The latest PACE report, released in August, showed that the greater the state subsidies and regulations for child-care programs, the higher-quality the program.

Fuller, a co-author of the research, says he and his colleagues were surprised to learn that so many of the 13,000 centers that contract with the Department of Education were better than those used by blue-collar families who foot the expenses themselves.

Illusions of choice

Not only are many parents choosing license-exempt child care but, in some regions across California, as few as one in five CalWORKs families are availing themselves of the guaranteed aid.

"People say we're spending more for vouchers. But if you're keeping a lid on a big sector of the child-care market — center-based care — you're not really expanding parent choice," Fuller said. "It's like saying parents can select Chevrolets or Fords, but they aren't going to make any more Chevrolets. It creates the illusion of choice."

Low reimbursement rates for state-funded centers have forced many to close. The Orange County School District shuttered several such centers last year. Another school district in San Jose County recently took similar action.

"Basically, you throw in a lot of money for vouchers without looking systemically at how to expand," said Nancy Strohl of the Child Care Law Center in San Francisco. "There's a real lack of supply... and centers are finding they can't do it for the amount of money they're getting."

Underpaid child-care workers

California's child-care system is further hampered by a reality that pre-dated welfare reform: Low wages and high turnover among child-care workers. The average teacher in a center-based program earns $7 an hour, according to the Center for the Childcare Workforce in Washington, D.C. In California's state-subsidized centers, even cost-of-living adjustments for salaries have been spotty, advocates say.

All About Kids owner Susan McGraw runs four day-care centers near the Mexican border in San Diego County. Her teachers earn $8 to $12 an hour.

"I wish I could pay them a lot more, but I can't charge enough to my parents," said McGraw, adding that she'd need to double her $145 weekly rates to pay her staff closer to what they deserve. Last year, McGraw lost 10 of her 33 employees. Most quit to take better paying jobs in government-run centers, she said.

McGraw opened her sites about the same time

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CalWORKs was launched. Initially, 60 percent of her 181 charges were paying at least part of their way with government subsidies. Now she takes vouchers from only 30 percent or so. In the early months, state reimbursement was a slow and painful process. "I would go look in the mail every day to see if I had a check or not. I had to get a line of credit," said McGraw.

Such administrative glitches have been widespread since the inundation of low-income children from welfare-to-work families, many acknowledge.

Responsibility for CalWORKs' child-care component is shared by not one but two state agencies: the Department of Education, which has overseen child-care programs since the 1970s and has nearly two dozen separate programs under its belt; and the Department of Social Services, which runs the first stage of welfare reform and is responsible for all licensing of daycare centers.

Among the additional layers of bureaucracy: dozens of community organizations and school districts that double as state-contracted "alternative payment programs," which process child-care vouchers. All of this contributes to what PACE's Fuller calls "a chaotic archipelago of child-care providers."

In an attempt to coordinate the many players and policies, state Senator Martha Escutia (D-Whittier) has proposed creation of a statewide master plan for child care. Her bill, SB 30, has strong support from child-care advocates and lobbyists. "Frankly, I think the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing," Escutia said.

Strohl is a backer of the proposed legislation. She fears, however, that Governor Davis' directive to legislators to rework the child-care subsidy system by the end of January, 2002 — in order to restore the $24 million stripped from the welfare reform budget — undermines more thoughtful planning. "What would have been a great opportunity would have been to have a year to do the master plan without people being cut off" from the last phase of CalWORKs, she said. "You cannot do policy development for vulnerable children with fiscal trade-offs."

What is the state's role?

One overarching question remains, and it is both philosophical and practical. Kay Ryan, executive director of the Child Development Policy Advisory Committee, sums it up this way: "I would really like to see the Legislature begin by asking what the role of government is in funding child care," she said. "Do we fund it because we know that the early years are when foundational brain development is occurring...Or do we fund child care as a work support to move families out of poverty?"

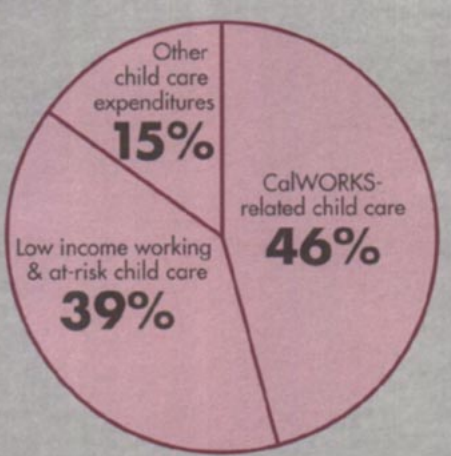
The ever-swelling body of research is undeniable, said Assemblyman Anthony Pescetti (R-Rancho Cordova). "We hear a lot more these days about the [ages] zero to three years being the best developmental time for a child's brain," he said. "With all the scientific and statistical data to support that, I think there is a role the state plays. Whether it comes directly from the state or through local school districts, that's something we need to look at."

That Governor Davis has instructed legislators to rewire the subsidies system with "existing resources" means some hard decisions must be made, said Tim Fitzharris, a child care lobbyist. Among the possible scenarios: Low-income parents covered by subsidies may be asked to increase their personal contributions, eligibility for child-care aid may be lowered, or providers may be paid even less than the current rates. "All of those," Fitzharris said, "create more problems that we haven't even thought about."

Jan Ferris Heenan, a former Sacramento Bee *reporter, is a freelance writer based in Sacramento. Comments on this article may be sent to* **edit@statenet.com**.

Spending on Kids

Nearly half the funds earmarked by the California Legislature for child care in this year's budget goes to families receiving CALWORKS or transitioning from welfare to work. A slightly smaller precentage helps subsidize child care for non-welfare, but low-income working parents. The smallest percentage helps aid families of all income levels with access to quality affordable child care.



California Budget Project, 2001

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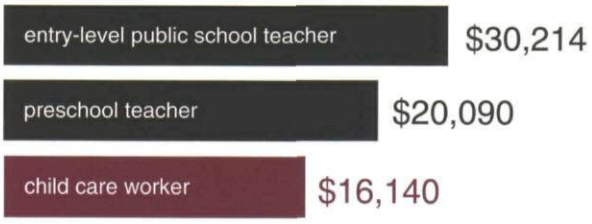
California's economy is thriving with more parents than ever in the work force. But of the nearly 4 million children of working parents, only one-fourth can be accommodated in existing licensed child care facilities. For families with access to coveted child care slots, the cost eats up a significant share of their monthly income — as much as 17% per infant for those earning the median wage.

Access to child care

The child care crisis is particularly acute in low-income communities where licensed child care facilities are in far shorter supply than in wealthier neighborhoods.

Hard work, low pay



Child care workers fare low on the pay totem pole, and finding qualified workers has become all the harder with higher entry-level teacher salaries.

California's child care

8th

California's rank in the nation for child poverty.

18% of California children ages 0-13 are living in poverty.

61%

Percentage increase in California's working mothers from 1970 to 1998.

55%

Percentage of children aged 0-13 years of working parents. Of those younger than five years with an employed mother, 66% receive care outside the family while an estimated 20% between six and 13 years old receive non-family care.

71%

Percentage increase of California's preschool age population (0-4 years) since 1970. This age group will climb to 3.1 million children by 2010, another 21% increase.

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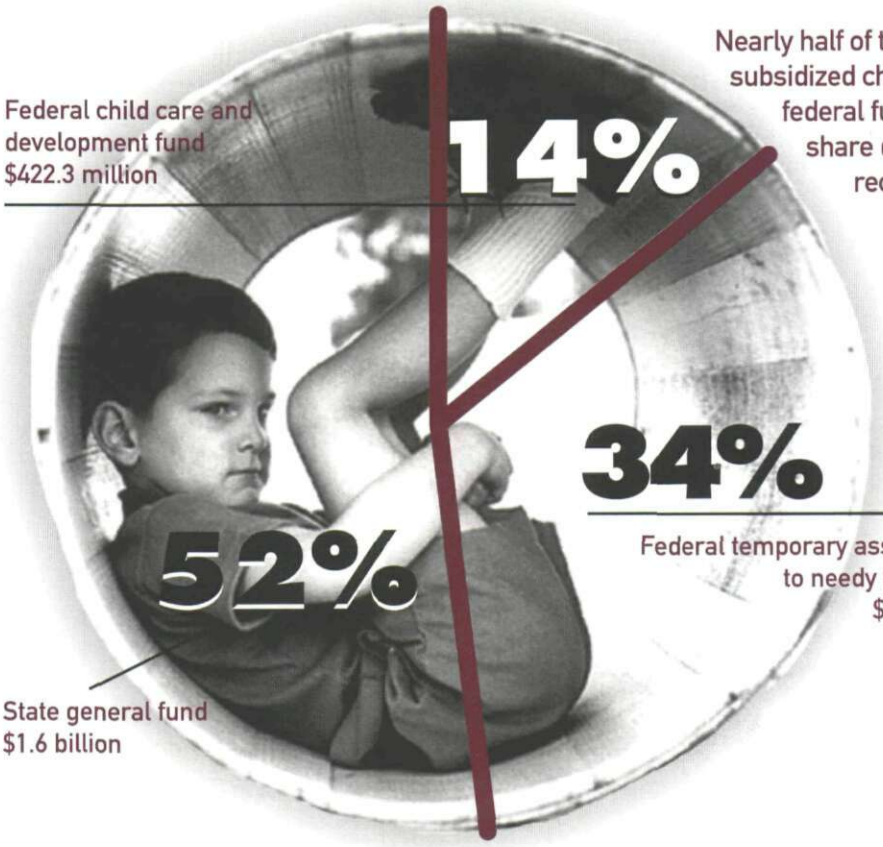
California's child care budget



Federal child care and development fund
$422.3 million

Nearly half of the state's budget for subsidized child care comes from federal funds with the largest share dispersed to families receiving CalWORKs or transitioning from welfare to work.

Federal temporary assistance to needy families
$1 billion

State general fund
$1.6 billion

Graphics by Scarlet Shin

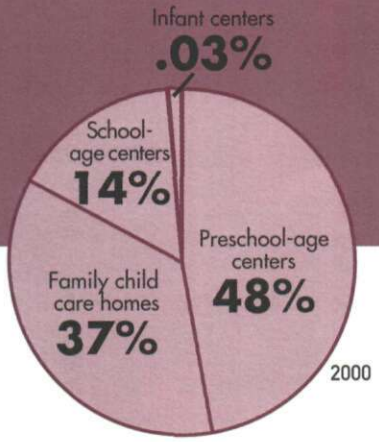
crisis

1/4

The fraction of a median-level monthly income ($3,900) for a family of three that goes toward care for two preschool age children. For a family of three with a monthly income equivalent to the poverty line ($1,179), typical child care would consume nearly all of the family's income.

280K

Number of children in working families who qualify for child care assistance on the basis of income but do not currently receive it.

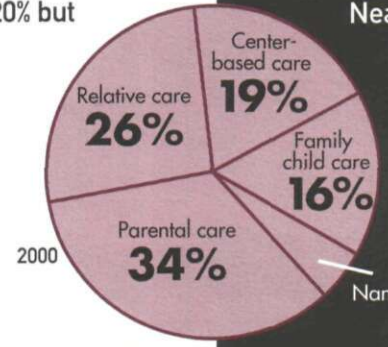


Licensed child care capacity

Over the last decade, capacity in licensed child care centers has increased by 20% but still falls short of working-family needs for affordable care.

Where preschoolers stay

Nearly two-thirds of California's preschool-age children are cared for outside the home.



Sources: Lasting Returns: Strengthening California's Child Care and Development System, California Budget Project, 2001; The 1999 Child Care Portfolio, California Child Care Resource and Referrral Network, 1999; California Teachers Association.

In the frontlines...

"I have had to go through seven babysitters. I make $1,200, but my rent is $900. I have been on a (child care) waiting list for so long that my kids are in school."— mother of two, San Francisco

"I loved working with children and families, and I would love to work with them in the future. But the amount of stress on the job in relation to what I was paid...I really felt I had no choice but to leave and pursue another career."
— former site director, state preschool program, San Diego

"My one-year-old son is in subsidized care, but my 2 1/2-year-old son is on the waiting list. I can't afford to pay for child care while I work, so my mother-in-law in Tijuana takes care of my older son for a week or two at a time."
— mother of two and assistant teacher, Oceanside

"If I had child care, I could finish my program and work towards self-sufficiency. I want to work for a living, and I want to make a better life for my kids. And it's hard...there's only one of me doing it all. I have been on a child care waiting list forever...for nine years."
— mother of four and student, Alameda

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A Republican disappearing act

If you look to California's southwest corner and see a reliably Republican stronghold in San Diego, it's time you gazed through a new telescope. The conventional wisdom that San Diego is a GOP bastion is a musty piece of political archaeology that has little to do with the facts on the ground today.

The current reality: California's second-largest city has become a distinctly Democrat-friendly place in recent years, a development that has played out in the last several elections. The result has been Democratic gains across the board from presidential elections to legislative contests and City Council races in what was once a sure-fire Republican stronghold.

Once upon a time, sunny San Diego was a Republican bulwark known for launching political careers like that of hometown star Pete Wilson. But with a swelling immigrant population and a growing number of independent voters, Democrats are finding more favor, chalking up recent wins at every level of government. The new political landscape has many wondering if the GOP can regain its monopoly.

By Philip J. LaVelle

"Outside of San Diego, we're pretty routinely perceived as being very conservative, Republican, kind of an extension of Orange County," said Assemblywoman Christine Kehoe, a Democrat and former San Diego City Council member. But that that's no longer so. "In metropolitan San Diego, there's a pretty strong population of Democrats, or people who lean Democratic when it comes to voting."

This electoral reality mirrors a broader statewide trend and has left Republican leaders groping for ways to recover, while buoying Democratic strategists.

"Twenty years ago San Diego was seen as a problem area," said Bob Mulholland, campaign advisor to the California Democratic Party. "Now it's seen as family."

Independents give Democrats the edge

Those family ties, however, are certainly somewhat tenuous. Democrats in San Diego still don't have the luxury of banking on steady year-in, year-out victories as can their peers in heavily Democratic San Francisco, Oakland or Los Angeles. In San Diego, party registration is nearly even. Electoral results are determined more by the city's substantial bloc of independent voters, not by overwhelming Democratic strength.

And the trend is geographically limited, with voters in rural and suburban

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Illustration by Sandra Hoover

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Three elected officials representative of the new voter base in the San Diego area. Democrat Susan Davis (above). Republican Juan Vargas (right) and Democrat Christine Kehoe (far right).

"The demographics are changing. You have people of color and young people, and people moving in from out of state, people that tend to be more Democratic than Republican."

— Assemblyman Juan Vargas

San Diego County favoring conservative Republicans for their Sacramento and Washington, D.C., representatives. Still, there is momentum behind Democratic gains within San Diego city limits, which began in the early 1990s, accelerated in 1998 and continues unabated.

Consider these examples:

•San Diego city voters favored the Democratic presidential ticket by commanding margins in the last three national elections. Al Gore beat George W. Bush by 11 points in San Diego city voting last November, while Bush prevailed by four points countywide. In 1996, Bill Clinton carried the city by 10 points, losing to Bob Dole countywide by one point; in 1992, Clinton beat George Bush the Elder by 11 points in the city and nearly two points countywide.

•In the 1998 governor's race, Gray Davis hammered Republican Dan Lungren by 15 points within city limits, while eking out a three-point victory county wide. Also in 1998, liberal U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer defeated Republican Matt Fong by nine points in the city, losing countywide by three points.

•The two congressional seats representing the bulk of city of San Diego territory are occupied by Democrats: veteran U.S. Representative Bob Filner of the 50th District and freshman Congresswoman Susan Davis of the 49th.

•Democrats occupy the California Assembly and Senate seats representing most of the city of San Diego.

•The June City Council election of Donna Frye, a surf shop owner and environmental activist, gave the San Diego city council its first Democratic majority in a decade. (The last Democratic majority was a passing phenomenon that lasted but a few months.)

It was not always this way. San Diego has a long Republican tradition. Democrats had a slight voter-registration edge within city limits going back decades. But Republicans always did well on Election Day, in part because the city's Democrats tended to be conservative — military personnel and defense-industry workers.

A place the GOP called home

San Diego's Republican heritage was a factor in the Republican National Committee's choice of the city for its 1996 GOP convention. And two Republican presidents of the past 30 years were particularly fond of the place. Richard Nixon, whose Western White House was just over the Orange County line at San Clemente, used to call San Diego his "lucky city." And Ronald Reagan ended his 1980 and 1984 presidential campaigns with rallies in San Diego, as he did during his gubernatorial bids.

So what happened? Political analysts point to several factors, including shifting demographics, the moderate political tastes of the city's so-called "coastal" Republicans sympathetic to environmental protection, abortion rights and gun control, and the large percentage of voters who check the "decline-to-state" box on voter registration forms.

Weakness in the state and the local Republican Party organizations is another factor, as is declining GOP registration. In fact, registration in both parties has slipped in recent years in San Diego, but the GOP has slipped at a greater rate.

Former Governor Pete Wilson, San Diego's mayor from 1971 to 1982, said the city could "swing back very quickly" to the GOP if a Republican is elected governor next year. "The fortunes of political parties in this state depend enormously upon the top of the ticket," Wilson said. "When the top of the ticket has done well, the entire party has done well, in the congressional races, the legislative races and in winning local office."

Conservatives miss the mark

Many analysts say Republican candidates in San Diego have been too far to the right for their districts, sending independent "swing" voters streaming to Democrats. As of August, city voter registration stood at 40 percent Democratic, 36 percent Republican and nearly 18 percent "decline to state." On a countywide basis, that party registration was nearly reversed with 41 percent registered Republican, 36 percent registered Democratic and 17 percent declining to state a party

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Former Governor Pete Wilson, was once a representative of the formerly strong Republican base in San Diego.

[San Diego] could "swing back very quickly" to the GOP if a Republican is elected governor next year. "The fortunes of political parties in this state depend enormously upon the top of the ticket." — Pete Wilson

preference.

"When we look at [San Diego's] registration figures, you think, 'My goodness, the Republicans ought to be extraordinarily competitive,'" said Allan Hoffenblum, a Republican strategist and publisher of the California Target Book, a nonpartisan political guide.

"But the reason the Republicans have not had success is the increased numbers of these decline-to-state voters," he said. "We're beginning to believe those decline-to-states are in many cases to the left of the Democrats. They're voting overwhelmingly Democratic."

Hoffenblum points to last November's outcome in the coastal 78th Assembly District, where Democratic incumbent Howard Wayne, a former deputy California attorney general, trounced Republican John Steel, a retired physician. Registration in the 78th District was 37 percent Democratic, 38 percent Republican and 17 percent "decline to state." The independents flocked to Wayne, who got 56 percent of the vote while Steel got 38 percent, precisely his party's registration.

"The San Diego decline-to-states are different," said Hoffenblum. "They're probably more liberal than any decline-to-state voters in the state. They tend to be pro-women, pro-life — and they see the Republican Party as intolerant."

"Every day, San Diego is becoming more and more a Democratic city," said Steve Erie, a University of California, San Diego, political scientist. "It's going the way of Los Angeles, which means you're starting to see the increased power of organized labor. Forty years ago, Los Angeles was a Republican town. In 1960, organized labor was extraordinarily weak and minorities had very little political influence, and look at it today. It's a Democratic city."

Labor in the Democratic equation

"This isn't a conservative city anymore," said City Councilman Ralph Inzunza of the 8th District, which stretches from downtown San Diego to the U.S.- Mexico border. "And when it comes to grass roots, the Democrats have the edge because of labor."

Labor played a large role in the June election of Frye, the environmental activist, to the City Council. Frye's Republican opponent in this non-partisan contest was the establishment favorite and amassed $269,000 to her $115,000.

Asked how she overcame this disadvantage, Frye quipped: "Money can't buy you love."

Frye had more than love in the game. She cobbled together a coalition of environmentalists, gays and lesbians, neighborhood activists and labor, for a superior ground game.

Jerry Butkiewicz, secretary-treasurer of the San Diego and Imperial Counties Labor Council, has become an important force in San Diego politics, in part by being a pragmatic centrist willing to form alliances with the city's business elite. And at campaign time, candidates who commit

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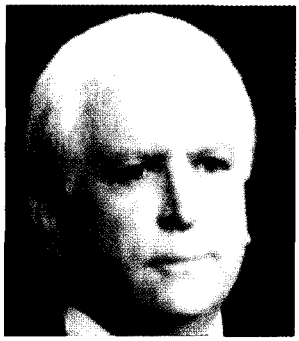
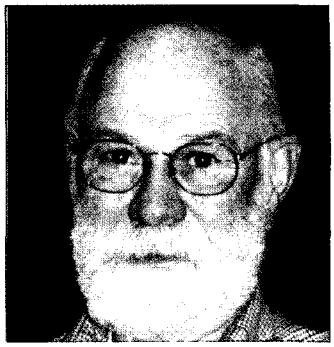


Allan Hoffenblum, California Target Book

"The Democrats have done a much better job, either by luck or by planning, of matching the candidates to their districts."

— Glen Sparrow



Glen Sparrow, San Diego State University

to improving wages, benefits and working conditions — traditionally Democratic turf — will get a serious look from labor, Butkiewicz said.

"We have over 100,000 members in 122 unions," he said. " I don't think it matters whether that candidate's a Democrat or a Republican or an independent. What matters is what that candidate stands for. We'll deliver an army to help that candidate."

High-tech workers go Democratic

The changing face of San Diego's workforce is also a major factor in the Democratic shift. When California's defense industry collapsed in the early 1990s, on the heels of the Soviet Union's collapse, San Diegans once employed by corporate giants such as General Dynamics retired or left the state. In their wake came New Economy workers — who are typically non-aligned politically — drawn to the city's emerging telecommunications and biotech sectors.

"The demographics are changing," said conservative Assembly Democrat Juan Vargas, in his freshman term representing the 79th District. "You have people of color and young people, and people moving in from out of state, people that tend to be more Democratic than Republican."

San Diego political consultant Tom Shepard, who has specialized in managing canpaigns for local Republicans in the past, including former Mayor Susan Golding, agreed. "The kind of people attracted to San Diego in the last decade or so tend to be younger, they come from other urban areas and their political backgrounds and expectations about government are different than the older, defense-industry workers they're replacing."

"The growth of the knowledge-based economy has tended to favor the Democrats," agrees Ted Roth, California chairman of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council. Roth, president of San Diego-based Alliance Pharmaceutical, said the city's new breed of high-tech workers "are not as dogmatic about [abortion] or gun control." Roth believes Democrats able to win historically have mainly been social moderates who, on fiscal issues, "believe it's more important for government to provide opportunity than to provide direct funding."

But Glen Sparrow, a professor of public administration at San Diego State University, calls GOP losses largely self-inflicted. "The Republican Party and Pete Wilson shot themselves in the head," he said, referring to Wilson's 1994 sponsorship of Proposition 187, which would have banned benefits to illegal immigrants. Proposition 187 contributed mightily to Latino disaffection with the Republican Party. Wilson, however, defends the measure as an important tax revolt that he said has been wrongly portrayed as racist.

Latinos in Democrats' camp

Latinos account for roughly 25 percent of San Diego's population and are projected to become a potent political force in the future. Sparrow predicts this voter bloc will continue to be attracted to Democrats, as will other constituencies who consider the GOP too conservative.

"The Democrats have done a much better job, either by luck or by planning, of matching the candidates to their districts," said Sparrow. The 1990 redistricting made the city somewhat better territory for Democrats, he added. "Look at state Senator Dede Alpert [39th District] and U.S. Representative Susan Davis [49th Congressional District] and even Assemblyman Howard Wayne. These are people who made themselves fit these marginal districts."

Ron Nehring, new chairman of the San Diego County Republican Party, hopes to overcome the momentum of recent history and do what previous county GOP chairs have failed to do within San Diego city limits: unite the local party and win elections. His strategy includes plans to borrow a page from the Democrats' play book in next year's races.

"Elections are won door-to-door," said Nehring, head of a GOP Central Committee known in recent years for internecine warfare. "I don't think we've suffered from a lack of good candidates. I think where we have been losing has been on the ground. That's where our emphasis needs to be."

Sparrow thinks GOP candidates who fail to court the center are doomed to failure.

"A good moderate Democrat can beat a right-wing Republican any day in those districts," he said. "The Republicans in San Diego tend to run social conservatives, and those social issues that the Republicans harp on — abortion and school prayer and right-wing family values and immigration — just aren't saleable. This is something the Republicans don't understand: San Diegans are not right-wingers."

Philip J. LaVelle covers local politics for The San Diego Union-Tribune. *Comments on this article may be sent to* **edit@statenet.com.**

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Justice for Stanley Mosk

Thank you very for the well-written piece on my father, Justice Stanley Mosk ["Justice Stanley Mosk," August 2001]. Respectfully, I would take issue with the statement that Justice Mosk was an "unnamed source" for a *Los Angeles Times* story. I was his lawyer for the Tanner proceedings. He was not the source. Indeed, the reporter had the story from some source and called various justices, including my father, to attempt to confirm it. Had my father been the source, the reporter would not have called him for confirmation, which confirmation he did not give.

The investigation, which went into this question, did not find that my father was a source. I hope this erroneous statement in the article does not become an accepted fact by virtue of its appearing in your prestigious publication.

Also, I do not believe my father espoused or suggested that he "deserved" to be named chief justice. From his political career, he understood that there is no such thing as "deserved." (After all, he probably did not deserve to be named to the Superior Court at age 30).

Of course, objectively, he did deserve that appointment as chief justice, but as the years went by, he seemed relieved that he did not have the administrative responsibilities. Again, otherwise, it was a fine piece.

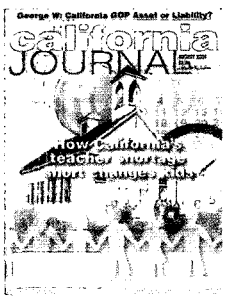
Richard M. Mosk
Los Angeles

Finding more teachers

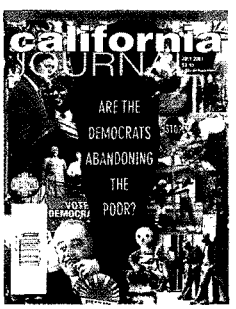
Really enjoyed the article on California's teacher stortage ["The search for qualified teachers," August 2001] I'd like to suggest a follow-up article on the implementation of the $5 million "Teacher & Reading Development Partnership" grant that 33 community colleges received. The focus could be on the programs each college has developed to recruit/encourage students to pursue a career in teaching. Significant efforts are being made to reach out to underrepresented populations and provide opportunities for students to engage in extensive field experience (i.e. literacy tutoring, classroom observation) in a number of different school sites while completing their lower division requirements.

The five-year grants were awarded by the California Community College Chancellor's Office, and those of us who were fortunate enough to receive them have just begun our second year. An article describing the programs and their reach would go a long way in getting the message out that coursework/pre-credential program can be started at the community colleges (at $11 per unit). With our open-door policy (as mandated by the education code) and diverse student population, community colleges will play a key role in training tomorrow's teachers.

Michele Harris
College of the Canyons
Santa Clarita



Maybe the "teacher shortage" in fact results from setting some qualifications too high. We teachers quickly understand that lesson plans and classroom presentations at a particular grade level do not require a teacher to possess knowledge way beyond that grade level. To take a stark example, there are no college-level subjects needed for a teacher to present kindergarten subjects. Moreover, there are no high school subjects needed for a teacher to present kindergarten subjects.



Maybe the mantra of needing a four-year college degree in order to teach any K-12 level needs to be revisited. The vast untapped teacher pool of high school graduates may very well be the most logical solution to the teacher shortage. I propose a pilot program that would allow high school graduates to teach elementary school grades.

Carl Olson
Woodland Hills

L.A. Hahn Victory

Oh, what a sad story you tell about the James Hahn mayoral victory in Los Angeles [Southern Exposure, July 2001]. Apparently all the hype and the hoopla by Los Angeles liberal media about the coming of the new Hispanic millenium did not bear fruit.

The comment about "simplistic statements" certainly sounds realistic after all the articles about the new and inevitable sea change coming with a city of over 40 percent Hispanic residents. Unfortunately, you totally miss the real meaning of the Los Angeles election — the rejection of state legislators coming back for more political jobs.

When the Los Angeles Hispanic population reaches 80 percent (with our interesting national policy on legal and illegal immigration) You may actually have a winner to ballyhoo.

Al Beltrami
Ukiah

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While congressional politics typically bear fruit for the state's mega $27 billion-a-year agricultural industry, things don't always shake out quite the way farmers might like. With Congress preparing to enact another big farm bill, it remains to be seen if California's farm lobby can yield a bumper crop of benefits for farmers.

California farmers till congressional soil

By Michael Doyle

California's agricultural industry can be a case study in contradiction. The Golden State is the nation's largest farm state, but it's also among those least dependent upon traditional crop subsidies. California boasts the largest congressional delegation but is outnumbered on the agriculture committees where policy gets written. And while the largest state in the union fairly ripples with lobbying muscle, it sometimes gets pinned by the courts and competitors or torn by internal conflict.

"While we're twice the size of the next farm state, the fact of the matter is that those states have fewer variables in the crops they grow. It's just so much more complex for us," said Bill Pauli, a Mendocino County grape and pear grower who serves as president of the California Farm Bureau Federation.

The complexity means California sometimes speaks with many voices on agriculture: Coachella Valley versus San Joaquin Valley, East Side versus West Side, producers versus processors, family farms

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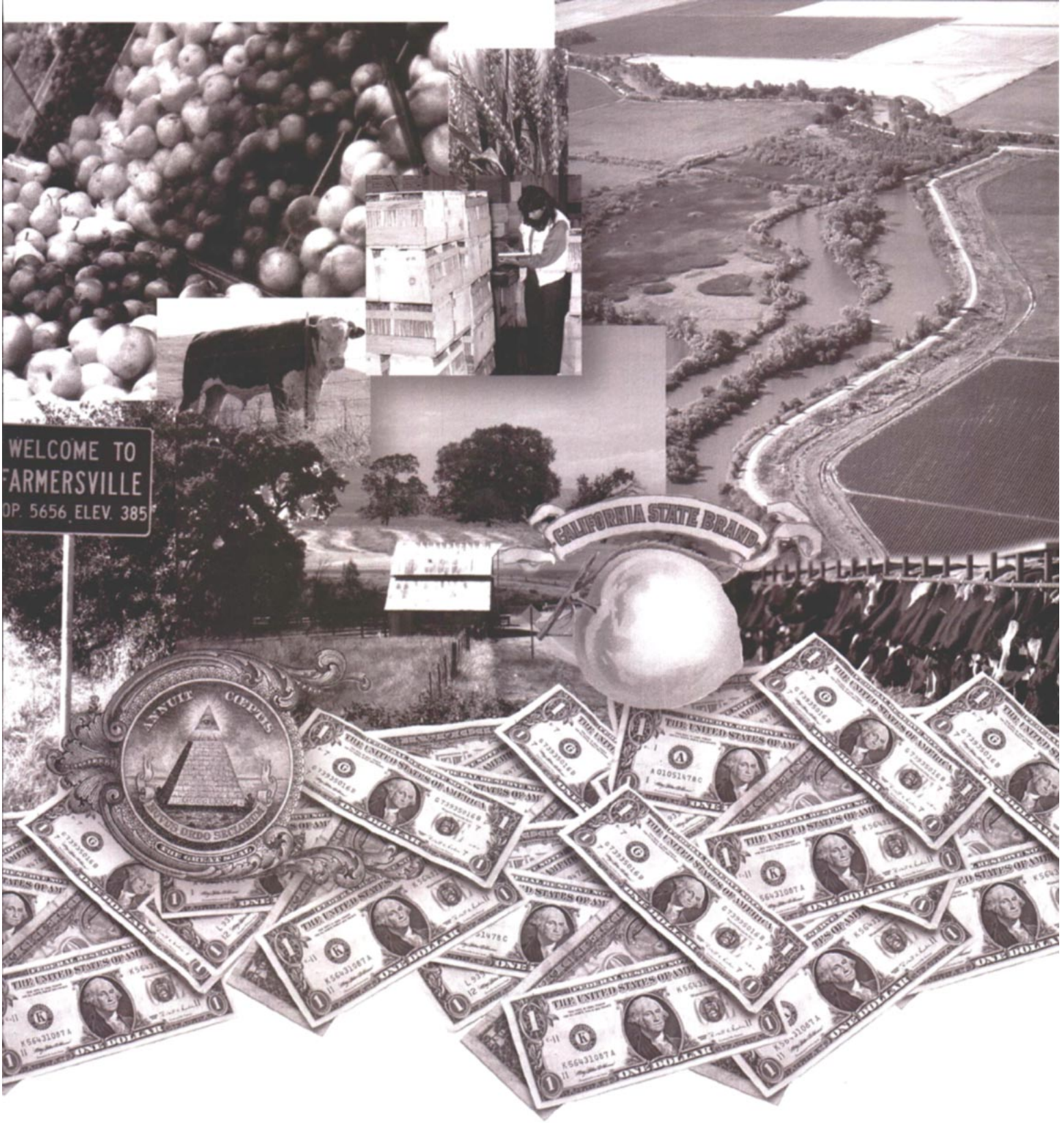

versus factory farms. The cacophony can call attention to the state but also undermine political clout at crucial times. Like now, for instance, when key crop, water and trade policies are being hashed out.

Congress is writing its latest farm bill, expected to be completed next year. An equally big-ticket California water bill, for the $8 billion program known as Cal-Fed, is likewise afloat on Capitol Hill and international trade maneuvering roils on, crucial to the state that annually exports $6 billion worth of farm products.

And amidst all this, Golden State political players are trying on new jerseys. Ceres Democrat Gary Condit, the most senior Californian on the House Agriculture Committee, reaped what he sowed with his private escapades and is essentially history. Among those Democrats whose name has arisen as a possible Condit congressional replacement:

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Bill Lyons Jr., head of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Farmers find reassurance with Modesto native Ann Veneman heading the agriculture department, but she has yet to put her stamp on specific administration farm bill proposals.

"They're a little vague in where they're trying to go, and that puts us in a tough spot." Pauli said, when asked about the administration's farm bill plans.

It is, in fact, pretty typical for administrations to keep their powder dry during the initial farm bill stages; and Veneman, formerly head of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, is well regarded by Pauli and other state growers. These growers relish having a Californian head the Agriculture Department because they know that, in matters of farm politics, California can be the great exception.

California not always competitive

Historically, California hasn't always had an edge despite the giant size of its agricultural output and its powerful farm lobby. In some ways, California's brawny farm industry is outfitted with the wrong kind of heft to be a good fighting match for Congress.

For most farm states, Uncle Sam is Mr. Bailout. The fundamental importance of federal crop subsidies to the wheat-rich Upper Midwest and Plains states, and to the rice- and cotton-growing South, channel those regions' political energies into the single-issue maintenance of a commodity safety net.

Consider Iowa, home state of the chairman of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee. When Democratic U.S. Senator Tom Harkin mulls farm politics, he's thinking of corn: the subsidized commodity that accounts for more than half his state's $6.6 billion a year in crop sales. His influential colleague, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle from amber-waving South Dakota, likewise is a basic commodities kind of guy. And in the House, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Larry Combest and senior Democratic Congressmen Charles Stenholm are both Texans who pledge allegiance to 100 percent cotton.

Bill Pauli, California Farm Bureau Federation

"What was amazing to me was these behemoth Midwestern program crops that really overwhelm the debate," California farm lobbyist Dan Haley said, recalling his first impressions on coming to Washington in 1989.

Nor is this program-crop focus confined to elected representatives on Capitol Hill. The 100,000 or so workers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as dedicated and diverse as they are, illustrate the concept political economists call "regulatory capture." The agency identifies itself with the regulated industry more than the general public; and for the agriculture department, this primarily means the commodity business, not the fruits and vegetables that make-up California's niche of "specialty" crops.

"The big problem is that the federal program crops have built up a cadre of public servants at USDA who are looking after their interests," said Bob Schramm, a Western Growers Association lobbyist with 36 years experience in Washington. "With [California's] specialty crops, they really haven't asked for assistance."

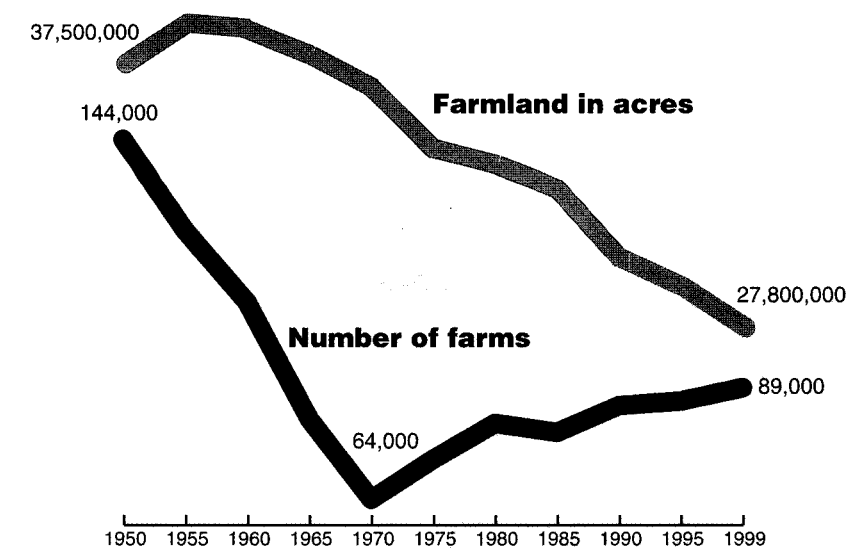
Subsidies come West

To be sure, California farmers also enjoy some fat subsidies — some rather hidden — that could soon be reshaped by Congress.

Farmers receive relatively cheap, if sometimes unreliable, irrigation water delivered by the federal Central Valley Project. The CVP's irrigation deliveries to some 3 million acres of Central Valley farmland, along with plans for new water-storage facilities, could be redirected by the Cal-Fed legislation that Democratic U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congressman Ken Calvert (R-Riverside) are trying to finish this year.

A less direct subsidy comes in the form of low-cost labor provided by several hundred thousand illegal aliens. Long-stymied efforts at developing a foreign guest worker program could now advance as President Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox

Farms and Farmland



California Department of Food & Agriculture

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hn DeLuca, Wine Institute

"There's been an active strategy of forming alliances. That's been essential, that this has been bipartisan."
— John DeLuca

declare themselves *compadres*, though the always-contentious concept could hobble along before consensus occurs.

The traditional farm subsidies the state already receives aren't exactly chicken feed. The Agriculture Department's Farm Service Agency paid out $904 million to California farmers last year, with the largest payments going for the basic commodities of cotton, rice and wheat. The state's farmers and their lobbyists ride the range year round on Capitol Hill to maintain these benefits.

"One of the strongest things the cotton industry has been able to do is to come together [with other regions]," said Haley, whose clients include the Bakersfield-based CalCot.

Specialized politics for specialty crops

But it's still diversity, more than subsidy, that really defines California agriculture. Specialty crops — the slightly misleading name applied to fruits and vegetables — dominate California and make specialty politics a requirement unique unto itself.

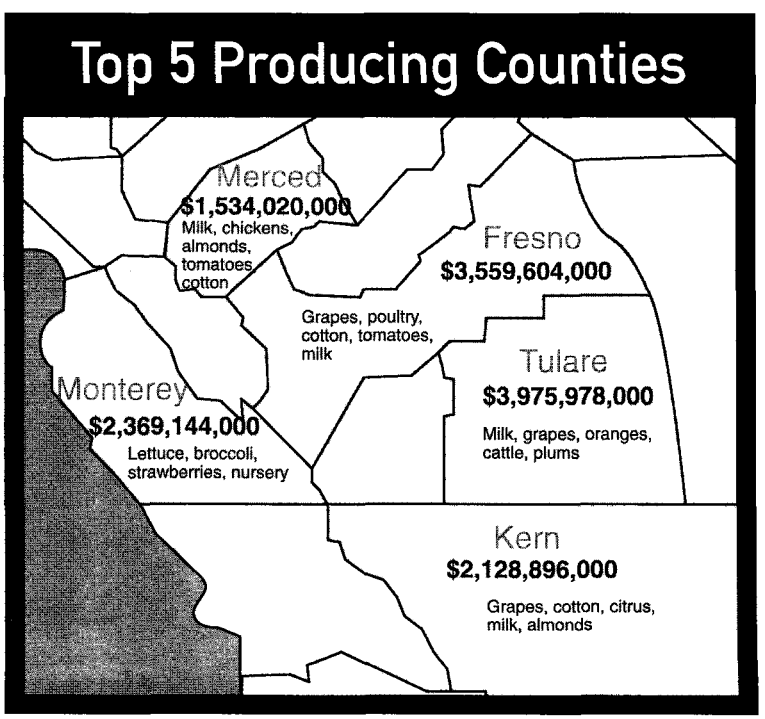
Take a sip, for instance, of the way wine works.

Wine isn't the state's largest farm product, by any means; that honor goes to mundane milk. At the bottom line, the wine industry cares about some pretty gritty things: access to pesticides and workers, cracking open foreign markets, federal research and more. It's a crop, simply put. Wine does, however, also have a certain panache that the industry and its allies promote in Washington. This intrinsic adult appeal, combined with the work of U.S. Representatives George Radanovich (R) of Mariposa and his Democratic counterpart, Mike Thompson of St. Helena — both with winemaking backgrounds — has attracted more than 150 members to the Congressional Wine Caucus.

Every year, California's wine industry cultivates Washington with a memorable reception held in the marble halls of the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress. The winemakers circulate like modest celebrities; no one needs reminding that the Wine Institute's highly regarded Washington lobbyist, Robert Koch, is President Bush's brother-in-law. The chamber music soothes, the wine pours freely and the friendships bloom.

"We in the wine world have helped bridge the rural and urban communities," said John DeLuca, president and chief executive officer of the San Francisco-based Wine Institute. "We're kind of in both camps. There's been an active strategy of forming alliances. That's been essential, that this has been bipartisan."

The congressional cultivation pays off with programs like the Market Access Program, a periodically controversial subsidy that helps U.S. exporters — especially those from California — promote products overseas. The program now provides $90 million annually; typically, the Wine Institute receives about $3 million of the total. The giant E & J Gallo Winery, the largest contributor to the Wine Institute, used to receive a big chunk of the funds;



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"By and large, most of the [Agriculture Committee members] are pretty fair to us, but then, California's agricultural industry doesn't ask for a whole lot, either,"

— Representative Cal Dooley

Representative Cal Dooley (D-Hanford)

new rules now direct the aid to smaller wineries and generic advertising. The federal aid pays, for instance, for foreign wine writers to have all-expense paid tours of wineries in the Napa and Sonoma valleys and Sierra Nevada foothills, in return for which they write intoxicating stories.

Wine junkets pay off

"These people have tremendous influence with consumers' buying patterns," the Wine Institute reported in an evaluation, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. "It is very important that we give them the opportunity to witness the industry firsthand."

Representative Richard Pombo, (R-Tracy), who chairs the House livestock and horticulture subcommittee, hopes with others to bump up the Market Access Program funding to $200 million a year. Californians consider this program their special share of a proposed farm bill largely devoted to commodities; they point, for instance, to the 20-fold increase in wine exports since the mid-1980s as evidence of program effectiveness. The program is usually small enough not to cause a ruckus among other states.

In other cases, though, California politicians have faced off with representatives from other regions. Sometimes the big state loses.

In the 1990 farm bill, for instance, Californians couldn't fend off a measure changing the state's unique dairy payment scheme. The complicated dairy changes were written into law. Though a slow-moving Agriculture Department never put them into practice, that 1990 fight illustrated the kind of regional rivalries that can entangle California.

"It was definitely the Upper Midwest against California," Haley said.

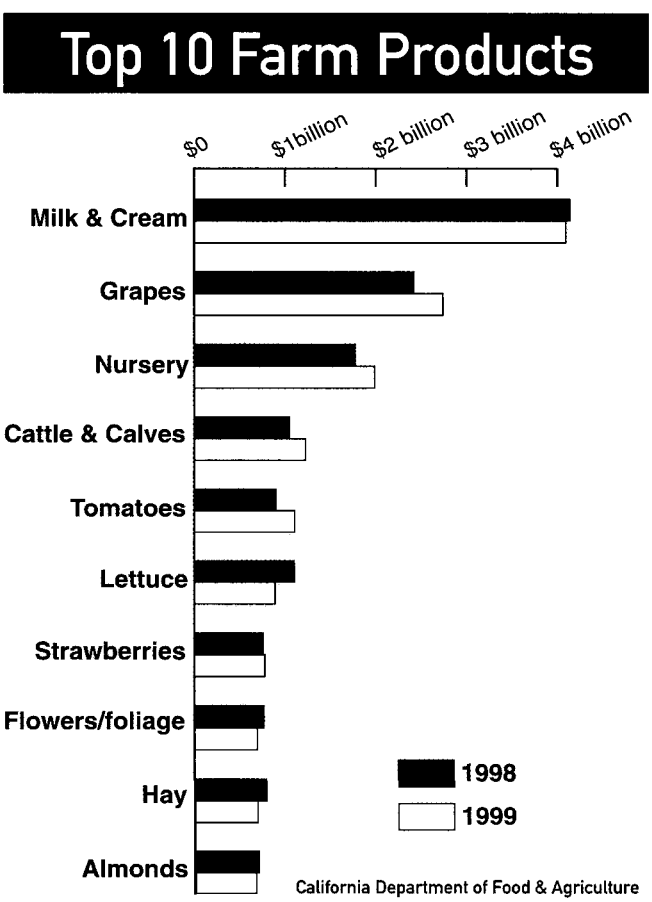
With its burly farms, California can also become particularly entangled in the periodic fight over limiting federal payments. The market value of farm products sold in California averaged $310,000 per farm, according to the 1997 Census of Agriculture. This was three times the national average.

But even within the state, tension over size envy can arise at times. Southern California grape growers got crosswise with San Joaquin Valley growers earlier this year by filing an ultimately unsuccessful petition with the International Trade Commission, complaining about Latin American imports.

Still, strictly regional flare-ups seem relatively rare.

"By and large, most of the [Agriculture Committee members] are pretty fair to us, but then, California's agricultural industry doesn't ask for a whole lot, either," said Representative Cal Dooley (D-Hanford). "When you get into the specialty crops, a lot of those growers don't really want much federal involvement."

Fruits and vegetables aren't directly subsidized; at least, not as a matter of course. The California Farm Bureau Federation pushed a plan earlier this year for a new $1.5 billion annual subsidy program serving specialty



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crops, but the idea fell on rocky soil.

There is, in fact, somewhat of a love-hate relationship between California farmers and the deep pockets of the federal government. Growers complain about high taxes and onerous regulations — they like to be free from federal entanglements — but grower groups push for more aid.

"It is with great distaste that industry has to beg government to get back a small amount of what was confiscated [through taxes]," said prominent Fresno County tree fruit grower Dan Gerawan. "Aid always becomes an entitlement. Eventually, industry can no longer survive without the handouts [and] government becomes more powerful as industry gets weaker."

Surprise subsidy

Congress earlier this year did pass a somewhat bizarre package that included more than $60 million for the California Department of Food and Agriculture to aid specialty crops. Even state officials were scratching their heads, trying to figure out what to do with the money.

By and large, though, Californians work in and around the margins. One way is through self-help, the kind of collective action that in agriculture takes the form of marketing orders. Authorized by Congress, these marketing orders enable growers to set minimum quality standards and to assess fees to pay for advertising and research.

Gerawan narrowly lost a 1997 U.S. Supreme Court challenge to the marketing order covering peaches, plums and nectarines. Earlier this year, however, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the mushroom marketing order's mandatory fee as being an infringement of free speech. The Court ruled that compelling a farmer to pay a fee to fund advertising amounts to forced speech in violation of the First Amendment.

"Growers," Gerawan said, "should not be forced to pay for advertising with which they do not agree and spread by a messenger they cannot choose."

Many other growers, though, strongly disagree with Gerawan, and they're anxiously watching as the U.S. Department of Agriculture tries to reconcile the two Supreme Court rulings.

"I like the program we have, since we tax ourselves to fund research and promotion for ourselves," San Joaquin Valley almond grower Chris Woolf said earlier this year. "This is being self-centered in a positive way!"

Say this about the marketing order conflict: It's not going away soon. Like the other tensions bound up in California farm politics, it's a perennial. And as Congress works out the latest federal farm bill, many of these perennials will certainly bloom once more.

Michael Doyle is a reporter in the Washington bureau of McClatchy Newspapers. Comments on this article may be sent to **edit@statenet.com.**

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Agricultural Secretary Ann Veneman

A 15-year veteran of state and federal agricultural bureaucracies, Ann Veneman nabbed the top spot overseeing the nation's fourth largest agency. A supporter of open trade markets and of genetically engineered foods, Veneman has her hands full convincing farmers and consumers that she has their best interests in mind.

By Dana Wilkie

During the first few months of George W. Bush's administration — when most new Cabi net secretaries were rounding out their staffs, decorating their offices and easing into their new roles — Ann Veneman was getting a boot-camp introduction to her job heading the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

First came Britain's outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, which required the new secretary to swiftly mobilize prevention in this country. Then came the announcement — unauthorized by Veneman — that her department would stop salmonella testing in ground beef used in school cafeterias, news that provoked an avalanche of publicity and forced an embarrassed Veneman to reverse the order. In June, Veneman found herself assuring outraged Californians that pump prices would not rise because of an administration decision, which she supported, that the state add ethanol to its gasoline. And for part of the year, Veneman tackled these ordeals without the help of key deputies whom Bush had yet to appoint.

Thankfully, Veneman had experience with such challenges: As the former agriculture secretary in California, she had waged her battles with Mexican fruit flies. She had endured the publicity hell surrounding the state's supposedly "tainted" strawberries. And she had navigated an internal management crisis or two. Veneman's introduction to the state's $200 million, 1,800-employee state department was perhaps no less nerve-wracking than taking on Washington, D.C.'s, fourth largest agency last January.

"In California we are familiar with dealing with these kinds of things," said Veneman, who settled down at a conference table in her office overlooking the

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Arbor Day planting on Capitol Hill with Christie Todd Whitman, EPA administrator.

Washington Mall—the oblong stretch of land that, years ago, was the department's so-called experimental farm. "If we get a serious disease [there], all of a sudden, trade stops."

In her new job, Veneman is re-

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sponsible for food safety, forest management, soil conservation, farm loans, food stamps, school lunches and marketing farm products abroad. So far, she has earned high marks for being open-minded and accessible, and for managing early challenges with competence and professionalism.

A fine balancing act

But Veneman certainly has her critics. Trade experts believe her global orientation may hurt domestic farmers; Midwest farmers wonder if her policies will favor California growers; and food-safety watchdogs worry that her support for genetically engineered foods may leave consumers in the lurch.

Ann Veneman with California 4-H youth visiting the U.S. Department of Food and Agriculture.

Ann Veneman talking with grade school students at an agricultural exhibit at the Smithsonian Instution during National Agriculture Week 2001.

"She definitely has consumer interests at heart, but she is a tough, business-minded person, pro-business and pro-technology," said one industry watcher.

A Modesto native whose parents tended some 60 acres of peach trees, the 52-year-old Veneman has roots in farming and in politics. Her father, John, served with fellow Republican Pete Wilson in the California Assembly and was later undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare for President Richard Nixon. Veneman herself served under the senior George Bush, first as undersecretary of the USDA, then as deputy secretary, the department's number-two spot. While at the department from 1986 to 1993, she helped negotiate agricultural portions of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the major international trade umbrella of the 1990s.

Her career has been marked by a series of "firsts": First woman and partner at the Modesto law firm she joined in 1979; highest-ranking woman to serve in the U.S. Foreign Agricultural Service; first female deputy secretary at the USDA; first woman to head the California agriculture department; and now, first woman to lead the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"It's not that I'm trying to do that," Veneman says. "It just happens."

Married and divorced years ago, Veneman has no children but is a cat lover "of the highest order" who dotes on her feline, Sammy, said one friend. She takes power walks while listening to books on tape. She is passionate about politics, and can discuss it for hours.

Divergent views

Frank Damrell is a federal judge in Northern California who was managing partner of the Modesto law firm where Veneman worked. He sees in the new secretary her father's focus and drive. Like her dad, Damrell said, Veneman works well with those who have opinions different from her own.

"That's probably the key to her success throughout her political life," Damrell said. "I don't mean to suggest she doesn't have strong views about what ought to be done. But her distinct advantage is that she brings other people with her who first may not have agreed with her. That's the hard part."

When Wilson selected her in 1995 to head the troubled California Department of Food and Agriculture, California growers were wary. They wanted a farmer — someone like former Agriculture Secretary Henry Voss, a tree-fruit grower who resigned after failing to report more than $400,000 in farm income while making government decisions that could have affected those holdings. Not only was she the first

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Ann Veneman talking about trade promotion on Capitol Hill with members of the U.S. Senate.

non-farmer to head the agency since the Jerry Brown administration, Veneman was coming from Washington, D.C., where she was practicing law with the firm of Patton, Boggs & Blow. Veneman had to lead a dispirited agency under the dual stigma of being a Beltway insider and a lawyer.

The state's farmers "definitely made the road a little rougher and steeper for her in the beginning," said Nita Vail, who was Veneman's assistant secretary in California. "But she came in with such a professional attitude and sensitivity to the industry that she did a really good job of getting through a difficult time."

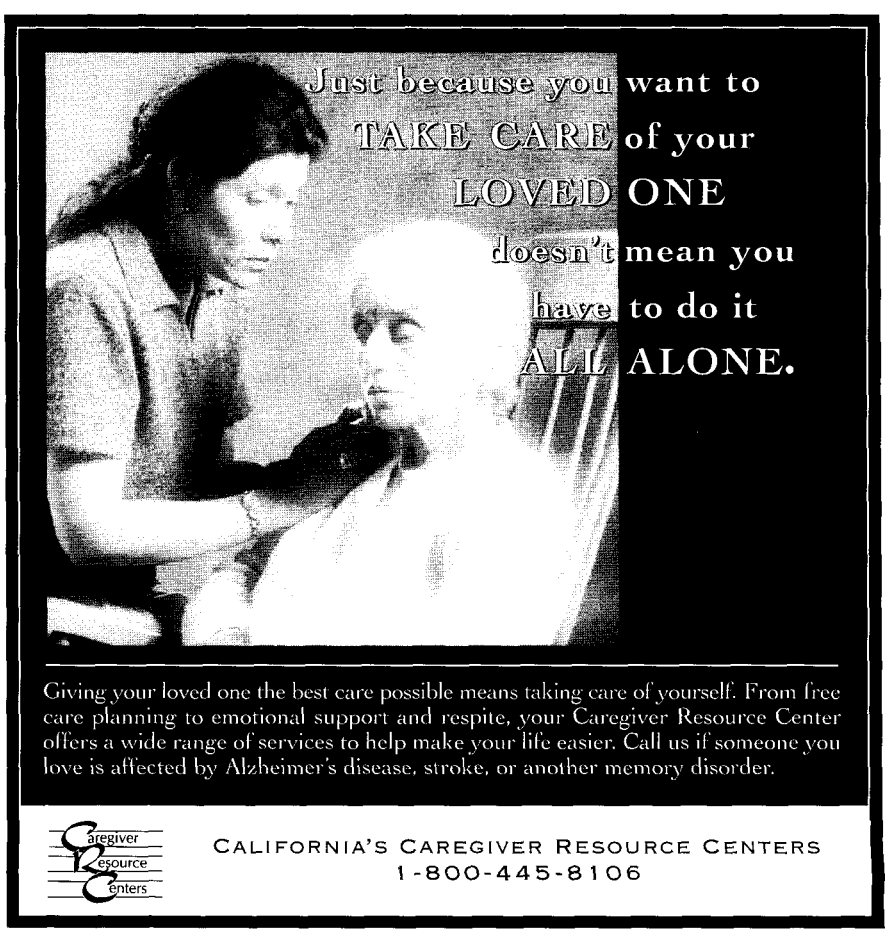
Wary of a Californian

Veneman instantly faced the same skepticism in D.C.: Farmers from the South and Midwest — accustomed to dominating agricultural policy — were wary that the country's top farm job went to a Californian. The Central states — where corn, wheat and cotton are predominant — have long relied on federal subsidies to weather rough times, including overseas competition created by trade pacts. Veneman may find it hard, they say, to appreciate price-support programs that do not benefit California's specialty crops or big agribusinesses.

"Certainly there were traditional commodity groups from other states who were very skeptical of a California lawyer and a female being in charge of the USDA," said Karen Ross, president of the California Association of Wine Grape Growers. "I'm sure Ann continues to get a lot of scrutiny from major commodity groups and [from] other states to make sure she's not showing any partiality to her home state." Perhaps to put their fears to rest, Veneman chose a Midwesterner as her deputy.

That was Veneman's first hurdle. Another came barely three months after she was sworn in as USDA secretary. In April, the nation's newspapers announced her department was dropping salmonella testing of meat used in school lunch programs. It was news to Veneman. Apparently, the decision was made by department bureaucrats who were responding to meat-industry pressure, and who perhaps took advantage of the change in presidential administrations to loosen testing regulations. "It was clearly something that was very embarrassing to her that it moved out without her final OK," said one person close to Veneman.

Veneman reversed course immediately. "The fact that she took very prompt action was an excellent indicator that the new administration takes food safety issues seriously," said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Caroline Smith DeWaal, director of Food Safety for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a non-partisan consumer advocate.

Business vs. consumers

Others, however, point out that Veneman is a Republican working for a GOP president and therefore more likely to consider the business and political aspects of farming before consumer concerns. Critics point out that the USDA has moved slowly on standards for testing meat for listeriosis — a disease that contributed to 15 deaths in 1998. Veneman's new food-safety deputy, Elsa Murano, has financial ties to companies involved in irradiation, a controversial procedure to kill salmonella and other harmful bacteria.

"It's such a flagrant conflict of interest that it raises the question whether food safety will be seriously addressed," said Rod Leonard, a former USDA worker who is now director of the Community Nutrition Institute, a food-safety advocate. "We're dealing with a Department of Agriculture that will ignore the long-range actions necessary to clean up the American food supply."

There are other areas where Veneman may put business and politics ahead of the public interest, critics charge. Under her direction, the Forest Service is revising a Clinton-era ban on logging and road construction on nearly 60 million acres of national forest land, much of it in the West. She stood behind the Bush administration's decision forcing California to add ethanol to gasoline — a requirement that even fellow California Republicans say was Bush's political overture to Midwest farmers who grow corn used in ethanol.

A review of Veneman's battles in Sacramento show that as a Republican appointee, she often sided with agribusiness over consumer groups. The Consumer's Union, for instance, was generally unsuccessful in convincing Veneman's department to reduce farm milk prices, or to more strictly regulate use of a bovine hormone that they feared might harm milk drinkers. Veneman also supported extending the use of methyl bromide, a controversial soil fumigant.

Bio-tech friend

Biotechnology — particularly the engineering of food — may become Veneman's biggest food-safety challenge while in Washington. Veneman has spoken against mandatory labeling of modified foods, and as the USDA's deputy secretary, she helped — at the request of the biotech industry — to simplify testing requirements for such foods. Because she served on the board of a company that marketed one of the first genetically altered vegetables, critics will watch carefully to see what restrictions Veneman places on genetically engineered goods.

Veneman argues that "people haven't seen the consumer benefit yet, but [they will] as they recognize the environmental benefits and the opportunities to help people."

Trade will be another challenge. Veneman, who often visits local grocery stores when overseas, has a long history of promoting global trade. But some worry what that will mean for domestic growers and consumers. Open trade agreements and increased production abroad have cut into California's predominance as the world's grower of specialty crops. California exports are slipping at a time when the costs to produce them — including electricity, fertilizer and farm technology — have gone up. Such growers don't think much of trade policies that reduce tariffs, which Veneman supports.

"Trade has been the number-one thing on her agenda, but we're going to have to be very careful negotiating any additional trade deals," said Tony Corbo, a lobbyist for Public Citizen, a consumer watchdog. "I'm just leery of handing over the store to foreign competitors."

Veneman, however, sees opportunity. She has worked to whip up support among U.S. farmers for fast-track trade negotiating authority for the president, arguing that it will provide domestic farmers with new markets.

"Growth in coastal cities [overseas] is creating demand for more and higher-quality food products," Veneman said. "Hopefully, we'll be able to develop a lot more trade for some of the things that we produce in the U.S."

Dana Wilkie is a Washington D. C. correspondent for Copley News Service and a frequent contributor to California Journal. *Comments on this article may be sent to* **edit@statenet.com.**

Stanislaus County Public Defender's Office (1978-80)
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service (1986 - 89)
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Deputy Undersecretary of Agriculture for International Affairs (1989 - 91)
U.S. Dept of Agriculture, Deputy Secretary (1991 - 93)
California Dept. of Food and Agriculture, Secretary (1995 - 99)
Nossaman, Gunther, Knox & Elliot (1999 - 2001)
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Ann Veneman

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The price of clean

by Dana Wilkie

Assembled before Dianne Feinstein one day in August were some of the armed services' top administrators — rear admirals and brigadier generals and others in charge of military property across the nation. The California Democrat had called them to this — her first hearing as chairwoman of a military construction committee — to answer questions about the time and money it will take to get rid of pollution at California's closed military bases.

How much, the senator wanted to know, would it cost to clean Sacramento's McClellan Air Force Base, one of the nation's most polluted Superfund sites?

The Air Force assistant secretary in charge of installations told her it would take nearly $1500 million, and another 34 years.

Feinstein stared at the man. "Thirty-four years?" She asked, as if the number would not sink in.

The official tried to explain that plutonium discoveries had complicated the project, driving up costs and stalling the cleanup.

But Feinstein's silence conveyed her displeasure. "If I might say this," she said, "34 years is probably 30 years too long."

McClellan — contaminated with cyanide, pesticides, plutonium and other toxins — is just one of the military bases in California that fell victim to Pentagon budget cuts in the 1990s. Since then, military officials have run headlong into a reality holding up the redevelopment of bases: the high cost of clearing pollution.

During four rounds of base closings in the early '90s, California lost 29 installations and suffered 60 percent of the nation's military personnel cuts. Most of the bases had significant levels of pollution, ranging from contaminated groundwater and soil to unexploded ammo.

At the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station north of San Diego, a potentially harmful chemical called perchlorate was discovered in the groundwater beneath the base. At Hamilton Air Force Base in Novato, which closed 25 years ago, leaking methane gas is just the latest environmental problem. Even at San Diego's old Naval Training Center — which had enjoyed one of the most successful clean-up programs in the state — the Navy is now balking at cleaning up a boat channel that the city wants for a commercial waterfront center.

Said one San Diego city official: "We're starting to encounter problems now... I think they're starting to understand how expensive this really is, [cleaning] all these bases."

President George W. Bush wants to cut the budget for cleaning closed bases by more than one-third, even though military property throughout the state stands idle because there's not enough federal money to get rid of jet fuel, nuclear material and other toxic substances. The $491 million that Bush would spend next fiscal year to clean bases would barely clean McClellan.

Now that the president wants to consider more base closings in 2003, Democrats and Republicans in Congress warn that he won't have their support unless there is more money to clean those already shut.

The $491 million that Bush would spend next fiscal year to clean bases would barely clean McClellan.

Under federal law, the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force must clean pollution at closed bases — if they were responsible for it — before turning the property over to local authorities. But for years, politicians and communities have warned Washington there would be considerable delays in converting military property unless Congress sent more money to clean pollution.

"It seems strange to me that the administration is planning to request a new round of [base closings] when it cannot even pay the tab for the last go-round," Feinstein said at her August hearing, which she held as chairwoman of a subcommittee in charge of military construction.

She might find it even stranger that the General Accounting Office, in a report last year, called on the Pentagon to better manage the money it already had for cleaning closed bases. The GAO said the Department of Defense had an unused backlog of more than $2 billion of cleaning money.

State environmental officials said base-cleaning bills have grown faster than the defense department predicted because new cleaning technologies are expensive, labor costs have grown dramatically, and defense officials who need extra money can easily take it from clean-up funds.

"I don't know of any base that's been completely remediated," said Jim Spagnole, an assistant secretary with the California Environmental Protection Agency. "The longer there are delays in cleaning up these bases, the more costly it will be — because nothing seems to get any cheaper."

Dana Wilkie is a Washington, D.C., correspondent for Copley News Service. Comments on this article may be sent to **edit@statenet.com.**

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The election of Alex Padilla as president of the Los Angeles City Council is one for the record books. The Pacoima native is the first Latino in 133 years to hold the job and the first from the San Fernando Valley in nearly two decades. At 28, he is also the youngest ever to serve as president. In this interview for California Journal, Padilla talks about the pitfalls and politics of Los Angeles.

Alex Padilla, Los Angeles City Council President

By Marcos Frommer

As Los Angeles City Council president, Alex Padilla wields substantial power. He controls the governing body's agenda, appoints colleagues to committees and has a significant impact on Council redistricting. Above all, he is the second-most powerful elected official in Los Angeles behind newly elected Mayor James Hahn.

It's a heady responsibility for someone whose rise in politics began just six years ago. After graduating from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) in Boston with an engineering degree, Padilla returned home and worked briefly as an engineer. He soon left to pursue a job as an educational counselor for University of the Pacific in Stockton, working with the Upward Bound program that mentors and advises high school students. Shortly after finishing a CORO Fellowship, he dipped into politics in 1995 as a volunteer signature-gatherer for Assemblyman Tony Cardenas (D-Sylmar), who was making his first bid for the Legislature. Within a few months, Padilla was promoted to campaign manager.

Padilla's formal introduction to Los Angeles city government came when he was appointed by then-mayor Richard Riordan in 1997 to the city's building and safety commission. Two years later, he won his first City Council seat.

A product of local public schools, Padilla is the son of working-class Mexican immigrants. His father "scrambled eggs and flipped pancakes," and his mother cleaned houses to support Alex and his siblings.

CJ: How has your upbringing in Pacoima influenced your political career?

Padilla: Actually, baseball opened my eyes. In high school, we would travel to other schools in different parts of the Valley and the city, and I began to see the disparity from community to community. It was the quality and cleanliness of the schools and the upkeep of the neighborhoods. There would be streets and sidewalks that were cracked and potholed in one part of the city, and in another part of the city, the streets

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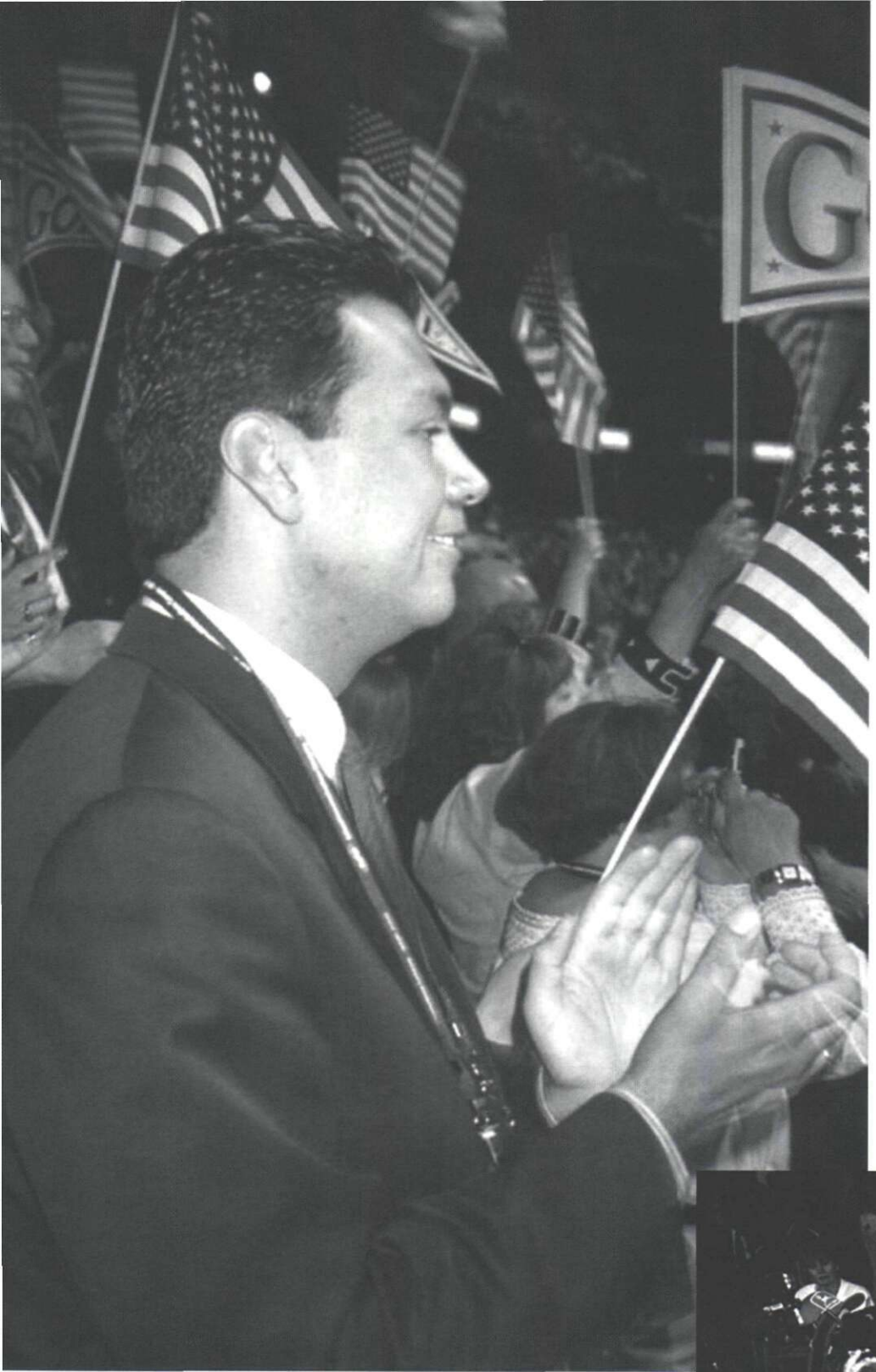

Alex Padilla during Al Gore's speech at the 2000 Democratic National Convention (above). Minutes after winning his election as City Council president (right).

and sidewalks would be immaculate. That's when I started to notice inequities around the city and started to think that I needed to do something, that whatever career I pursued, I needed to devote some portion of my time and energy toward improving my own community.

CJ: You began as an engineer. How did you decide to make politics your profession?

Padilla: I enjoyed engineering, but it wasn't personally satisfying or fulfilling. I landed in politics and government because of Tony Cardenas. He was a personal friend. We lived three blocks from each other, and when he decided to run for Assembly, he asked me to help. It was an easy "yes," because it was for a district where we were born and raised and lived, and [where]we saw our future.

CJ: What do you consider your greatest accomplishments for your district?

Padilla: The increase in funding for basic services: street and sidewalk maintenance and repair. We also got assistance for low-income families to get sewer hookups. There are still thousands of homes throughout the city clustered in areas like my district that rely on septic tanks. Another accomplishment is the North Valley Police Station, a project that had been promised to the area for over 12 years. And I'm very proud of the Children's Museum, a project that no one believed would happen in the North Valley because it was too far from downtown.

CJ: How did you get these projects through?

Padilla: A lot of hard work, a

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little bit of luck, and the result of working together with senior leadership. The police station, for example, was the first big project I took on when I joined the council. We identified some surplus funds from completed projects, and I worked directly with the mayor's office.

When it came to the Children's Museum, it, too, was something that people advised me, "Oh no, it's very unlikely to happen. If you push for it and fail, you'll look bad in your first term in office." Again, the opportunity was too great; a Children's Museum campus in the San Fernando Valley made sense. So we organized, mobilized, and demonstrated widespread support for the idea, and now we're getting ready to break ground.

CJ: What are your top policy priorities as president?

Padilla: I've polled the other Council members and... everyone is talking about education, basic city services — from how we pick up trash to how we trim trees — public safety, economic development and creating quality jobs throughout the city. But just as important as our agenda is how we go about working together. With the new charter, the new mayor and many new members, and the fact that we're back in the real City Hall, there is a new spirit of collaboration, optimism and idealism that will show in our work.

CJ: You recently had a dust-up with three African-American colleagues — Nate Holden, Mark Ridley-Thomas and Jan Perry — who did not support you for president You were charged with racism for not appointing them to powerful committees on economic development and housing. How do you respond today?

Padilla: I don't know if you can respond to it. All I can do is have the faith that people will judge me over time and on my record.

CJ: Did you have an opportunity to talk with those colleagues after you became president and before committee appointments were made?

Padilla: The very first thing I did after becoming president was to meet with each member of the Council. I not only asked for the committees they would be interested in serving on or chairing, but I also asked for ideas on possible changes to the committee structure, what else we can do as a Council to be more effective, efficient and responsive to city needs. In the request for committee assignments, I do believe I granted everybody's request to the extent that I could. I was a little surprised that after assignments were announced that concern about these two particular commitees was of [such] magnitude because, in meeting with the three African-Amercian members, only a couple of them had mentioned interest in those committees. None of them mentioned that they were an absolute, top priorty. But through the course of conversations with them and the community, I came to share their concerns. In hindsight, we all learned from one another.

CJ: This seems like Politics 101: If you don't vote for the guy, you're not going to get anything from him.

Padilla: I wouldn't say the goal is to be vindictive. But clearly in politics, you have two things: your loyalty and your word. You're going to be more willing to help those who help you. For those who don't, you're not trying to punish anybody, but you just don't have the same type of relationship. We have many issues to work on together

Padilla's inauguration with James Hahn, new Los Angeles mayor, and Henry Cisneros, former HUD Secretary.

that provide opportunities to build relationships. That's what I'm focused on.

CJ: Frank Del Olmo [a *Los Angeles Times* editorial writer] criticized your handling of the committee appointments, referring to it as "naivete" and "arrogance." How do you respond?

Padilla: In terms of arrogance, people are entitled to their opinions. In terms of naivete, we have to recognize that people have different perspectives and approaches. Part of what some have brought to my attention as naive, by not recognizing this historical factor or this historical incident, may be valid. I also recognize that I wasn't born or raised during the '50s or '60s. I am younger. And my life experiences have been different, and the political climate that I entered is different than 25 years ago. I'm not discounting the struggles of the people who have come before me, because I fully recognize that I might not have graduated from high school, [or] had doors opened to me to go to MIT, [or] to even consider running for office if it weren't for the accomplishments of those who have come before me. But I think politics... has evolved from 40 years ago.

CJ: Schools seem to be a top priority for everyone. How would you like the City Council to improve public education?

Padilla: It's primarily about facilities. The city should be bending over backward to find locations for new schools, helping with planning, zoning and entitlement processes. We also have a big role to play in after-school programs,

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Opening of the Sun Valley Metrolink station.

a kickoff for free parking for electric vehicles
.os Angeles with Frances Banerjee (center),
ieral Manager, Los Angeles Department of
nsportation, and Los Angeles Transportation
nmission President, Charles Jelloian (left).

whether on the school site or in parks or libraries. I was involved in after-school programs growing up. It made sense for me to stay after school or go to the library and do homework until one of my folks got home from work. Unfortunately, funding for that has declined, but there's a huge need for it.

CJ: Concerning public safety, Los Angeles had its share of embarrassment following the Rampart investigation of police corruption that resulted in the appointment of a federal monitor to oversee the Los Angeles Police Department. Where does the Los Angeles Police Department go from here?

Padilla: The federal consent decree does not equal police reform. It's one piece of the reform we need for Los Angeles' police department. The full implementation of the senior lead-officer program [a popular program that assigned officers to work with specific neighborhoods on safety issues] has to be a big piece of police reform as well.

CJ: Do you support the mayor's call for a compressed work schedule for LAPD officers? [Hahn's support for a three-day, 12-hour shift aimed at boosting officer morale resulted in a key endorsement from the city's police union. Rival mayoral candidate Antonio Villaraigosa opposed it as excessively catering to the police union.]

Padilla: I agree with the mayor, but perhaps for different reasons. My support has to do with the recognition of recruitment problems, retention problems and a current morale problem in the police department. We need a drastic change to stop the hemorrhaging. I hope we will see the size of the force increase with the compressed work schedule.

CJ: In the area of economic development, we hear a lot about the film and tourist industries being the engine of the local economy. Yet, 95 percent of businesses in Los Angeles are small with fewer than 50 employees. What can be done to encourage businesses to stay in the city?

Padilla: Two years ago, the council established a Business Tax Advisory Committee to offer recommendations on how Los Angeles could become more business friendly by simplifying our tax structure. We have agreed to some of the committee's recommendations, like giving a one-year tax grace period for new business start-ups. We also need to simplify the dozens of tax categories for different types of business... to less than 10.

CJ: Former Mayor Riordan sought — with limited success — to bring Fortune 500 company headquarters to Los Angeles Will attracting corporate headquarters still play a key role in economic development?

Padilla: From a global perspective, it's important to maintain Los Angeles as a strong international business presence and a strong business location. But we need to balance that with the needs of our city and neighborhoods. We can't settle for a Fortune 500 company to come in and provide only minimum-wage jobs. We need job opportunities that pay living wages, jobs that allow people to raise families and buy modest homes and not have to live under the poverty line.

CJ: In your inaugural address, you adamantly criticized [San Fernando] Valley secessionists. Why do you believe the Valley should remain part of Los Angeles?

Padilla: Nobody has been able to convince me that the communities I represent will be better off with the Valley as its own city. It's irresponsible to take a pro-secession position without having the information to draw that conclusion. Whether or not the city should be split apart is going to boil down to what it means for communities, for peoples' tax bills, for public safety, trash pick-up. There are fundamental questions yet to be sufficiently answered. I'm not interested in breaking things up; I'm interested in making things work. When I was first elected three years ago, I knew we couldn't wait until November 2002 [the proposed date for a referendum on Valley secession] to begin to turn our communities around. The root problem is that people are not happy with the responsiveness of government. People were frustrated that they weren't receiving basic services. I've worked to improve that for my district, and we

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still have more work to do.The biggest concern I've heard recently is whether I or members of the city would get in the way of the November 2002 ballot measure. I'll say again: I have no interest in not allowing something to appear on the ballot, and I certainly won't get in the way.

CJ: Neighborhood councils [recently added by voters to the city charter] have been trumpeted as a way to give Los Angeles residents a greater say in the city's operation. What role will they play in setting policy for the city?

Padilla: The City Council will listen to neighborhood councils loudly and clearly. I want to emphasize that the spirit and intent of the neighborhood councils is to engage the disengaged, to franchise the disenfranchised. I would be disappointed if all we did was take the Neighborhood Watch captain, PTA president and chamber of commerce president, and call them "the neighborhood council." We need to get more people involved.

CJ: Public transportation remains a serious problem for transit-dependent Angelenos. How should the city create better transportation infrastructure?

Padilla: The city needs to be bolder in reinvesting in public transportation. Yes, we've sunk billions of dollars into rail, but we cut ourselves short. Anybody who has managed this type of project knows that initial costs are higher on average than long-term costs. We need to grow the network of rail and improve upon the bus service because they have to work together.

CJ: City Council reapportionment is coming up again. What are the challenges of redistricting, and do you have a sense where a new district might be created?

Padilla: We know that the majority of the population growth has been in the San Fernando Valley. The numbers justify creation of an additional all-Valley seat.

Another citywide concern is the big increase in Latino population in different portions of the city and what impact that will have on drawing additional districts that may elect Latinos, and who may be replaced [as a result]. It's going to be a very touchy area. The tensions raised with committee assignments was in part because people anticipate other challenges down the road. I hope we can steer through those challenges in a healthy, constructive way.

CJ: You were one of a small group of Latino elected officials who supported Mayor Hahn's candidacy. For that you were criticized by some Latino activists, as well as *LA Weekly*. But hasn't your election as council president and the election of Rocky Delgadillo as city attorney resulted in a significant increase in political power for Los Angeles' Latino community?

Padilla: Yes. It's a very important accomplishment for the Latino community, and we should be proud. But the only way this accomplishment adds to additional leadership opportunities in the future is for us to do the job well.

CJ: Has there been any move toward rapprochement with those who criticized your endorsement?

Padilla: Yes, people on opposite sides of the mayoral election are beginning to come back together, some more quickly than others, but I have full confidence that over time everybody will come together. With the two candidates in the mayoral runoff election [Hahn and Villaraigosa], we couldn't go wrong. They were both progressive, pro-labor, embracing of diversity and dreamers in terms of the [city's] potential. With Mayor Jim Hahn, voters opted for a little more practical experience when it came to the city of Los Angeles, and he's done a very good job embracing the Latino community and extending an olive branch to people who might not have supported him.

CJ: Finally, did your mom and dad offer you any words of wisdom upon your elevation to City Council president?

They said, "Just remember what we taught you: Be honest. Treat people with respect. And we'll be here to pull your ear if you forget."

Alex Padilla

Hughes Aircraft (summers, 1991 - 92)
Educational Counselor, UOP, Stockton (summer of 1994)
Coro Fellowship, September 1994 - June 1995
Campaign Manager, Cardenas for Assembly Campaign, July 1995 - March 1996
Field Deputy, Senator Diane Feinstein, April 1996- February 1997
District Director, Assemblymember Cardenas, February 1997 - December 1999
Campaign Manager, Richard Alarcon for State Senate Campaign, January 1998 - June 1998
Elected to Los Angeles City Council, 1999, in special election to fill Alarcon's seat

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Pacoima, California

BS, Mechanical Engineering
M.I.T., 1994

Marcos Frommer is a a contibuting writer for LA Downtown News *and host of the public-affairs television show, "Search LA". Comments on this article may be sent to* **edit@statenet.com**.

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